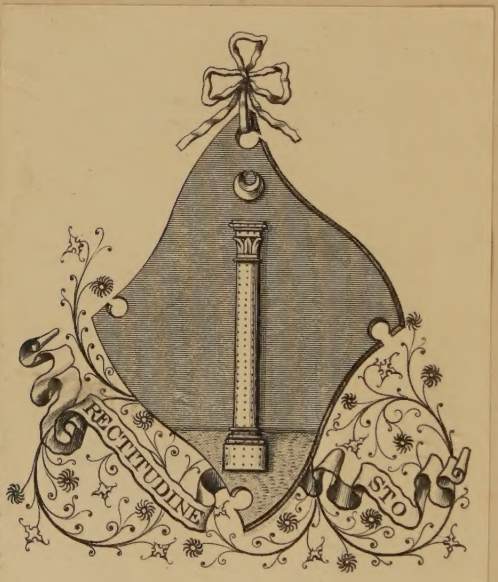
THE CAMPAIGN OF 1864
IN THE VALLEY OF VIRGINIA
AND
THE EXPEDITION TO LYNCHBURG



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THE CAMPAIGN OF 1864 IN THE VALLEY OF VIRGINIA AND THE EXPEDITION TO LYNCHBURG

BY

H. A. DU PONT

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE HUGUENOTS," "EARLY GENERATIONS OF THE DU PONT AND ALLIED FAMILIES" (TWO VOLUMES)

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PREFACE

I have recorded in this volume my reminiscences of the campaign of 1864 in the Valley of Virginia, as well as of the expedition to Lynchburg, which was a part and parcel of the same military operations. The fact that the book has been written at the request of my children will sufficiently explain the inclusion of a number of personal references of little or no interest to the general reader.

The testimony of a credible witness who has actually participated in any important episode of our Civil War will no doubt appeal to everyone who takes more than a passing interest in the history of that long protracted contest. My narrative does not pretend to give a complete account of the campaign in question, but is rather a recital of the incidents and events which came under my personal observation, and I should perhaps add that various memoranda jotted down many years ago, as well as a careful re-perusal of the official records, have served to refresh and confirm my recollections.

H. A. du Pont.

Winterthur, Delaware,
October 19, 1924.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Colonel H. A. du Pont . . . . . *Frontispiece*

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CHAPTER I

FROM NEW YEAR'S DAY TO THE BATTLE OF NEWMARKET

CHAPTER I

FROM NEW YEAR'S DAY TO THE BATTLE OF NEWMARKET

THE first day of January, 1864, found me in camp at Martinsburg, West Virginia, in command of Light Battery B of the Fifth Regular Regiment of artillery, a unit which was included in the troops stationed along the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad for the protection of that important line of communication between Washington and the West. The territory contiguous to the railroad, from Harpers Ferry west to the Ohio River constituted the military Department of West Virginia, Brigadier-General B. F. Kelley, United States Volunteers, in command, with headquarters at Cumberland, Maryland.

At that time I was not only the senior first lieutenant of the above battery, the captain being permanently detached, but was also the adjutant of the Fifth United States Artillery, an officer selected by the colonel from the subalterns of the regiment. As the law stood in those days, the adjutant was not an additional officer, which is now the case, and his name was borne upon the muster roll of the battery to which he belonged as "on detached service as regimental adjutant." My actual position, however, was exactly the reverse of this and practically unique, as my colonel (Brevet-Brigadier-General Harvey Brown, United

States Army) while declining to accept my resignation as adjutant, had permitted me to go into active service and assume the command of the battery to which I belonged, my name, until my promotion as captain, being carried upon the regimental "field and staff" muster roll, as "on detached service in command of Light Battery B."

In view of an expected attack by the Confederate forces at Winchester, the battery was ordered, about 9:00 A. M. on New Year's day, to take position on the Valley turnpike near Martinsburg. The weather was clear but bitterly cold and until late in the afternoon the officers and men shivered in the wintry blasts, which benumbed their hands and feet, when the welcome order came to return to camp, no enemy having appeared. Colonel Lewis B. Pierce of the Twelfth Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry, the immediate commanding officer at Martinsburg, took very seriously his responsibility in case of an attack and visited the battery a number of times during the day.

Nothing further of interest occurred while we were encamped at Martinsburg for the remainder of the winter, and during the early spring the condition of the roads practically suspended all military operations.

On the 29th of February, 1864, General Kelley was superseded in the command of the Department of West Virginia by Major-General Franz Sigel, United States Volunteers, who took charge upon his arrival at Cumberland on the 10th of March. General Sigel, then in his thirty-ninth year, was a native of Germany and in his youth had been a lieutenant in the Baden army which he left to embark in unsuccessful revolutionary movements. In con-

sequence, he had been forced to abandon his native land in 1849, and after three years mainly spent in Switzerland and England, had established himself in America in 1852, some nine years previous to our Civil War, where the revolutionary activities of his younger days had made him a popular hero among his fellow-Germans in the United States. Entering our army in 1861 as a colonel of volunteers, he was quickly appointed a brigadier and later a major-general. After serving in Missouri, he led a force which in 1862 fruitlessly pursued Stonewall Jackson in the Valley of Virginia and later in the same year became a corps commander under General Pope, where his sluggish movements and constant disregard of instructions brought him into very great discredit with those in high command.

On the 17th of May, two days after the battle of Newmarket, General Halleck wrote as follows to General Grant: "I have sent the substance of your despatch to General Sigel. Instead of advancing on Staunton he is already in full retreat on Strasburg. If you expect anything from him you will be mistaken. He will do nothing but run. He never did anything else."[1] Halleck, as it would seem, did not mean to impeach Sigel's personal courage, but referred to his incapacity as a commander which had always resulted in the enemy's getting the advantage and compelling him to beat a hasty retreat.

Notwithstanding Sigel's most unsatisfactory military record, Secretary Stanton, no doubt on account of political considerations, selected him for the independent and highly

[1] *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter abbreviated "O. R."), Series I, Vol. XXXVI, Part II, p. 840.

important command of the Department of West Virginia, and it is to be noted that the disastrous results of his unwise choice probably induced the Secretary to confer with General Grant in regard to the selection of Sigel's successor. In any event, on the 19th of May Grant telegraphed General Halleck as follows: "By all means I would say appoint Hunter, *or anybody else,* to the command of West Virginia." [1]

As might have been anticipated, Sigel's attitude throughout his service in the Union cause was largely that of a foreigner and he was always very keenly alive to the interests of his fellow-countrymen whom he sought to favor by every means in his power.

Upon taking charge of the Department of West Virginia, he proceeded to organize the troops under his command into brigades and divisions, the First Infantry Division, to which my battery belonged, consisting of two brigades, each composed of four regiments of Volunteer infantry, under the respective commands of Colonels Joseph Thoburn, First West Virginia Volunteers, and Augustus Moor, Twenty-eighth Ohio Volunteers, a German organization from Cincinnati. The artillery destined for field service was assigned as follows: Du Pont's Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery, Snow's Light Battery B, First Maryland Volunteer Artillery, and Carlin's Light Battery D, First West Virginia Volunteer Artillery (each equipped with six 3-inch rifled guns), to the First Infantry Division under Brigadier-General Jeremiah

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 492. (The *italics* are the author's.)

C. Sullivan,[1] United States Volunteers, to which also belonged Von Kleiser's consolidated Thirtieth and Thirty-second New York Volunteer Light Batteries, another German organization, equipped with six 12-pounder smooth-bore brass pieces, known as Napoleon guns, their range being much inferior to that of the 3-inch rifled pieces. Ewing's Horse Battery G, First West Virginia Volunteer Artillery (four 3-inch rifled guns), under Lieutenant Morton, formed part of the First Cavalry Division commanded by Major-General Julius Stahel,[2] United States Volunteers, another foreigner. Sigel made no provision for a chief of artillery nor for any separate organization of that arm of the service, thereby throwing away the advantages of proper selection of position, concentration of fire and general "ensemble" of operations which so greatly promote its efficiency. He also appointed General Stahel chief of his staff without relieving him from the command of the First Cavalry Division, a step which practically gave him full control of Sullivan's Infantry Division as well as of his own.

General Grant had decided that Crook was to move from the Kanawha and that all available troops in the Department of West Virginia were to concentrate at Beverly,

[1] Born in Indiana in 1830; in 1861 captain of the Sixth and later colonel of the Thirteenth Indiana Volunteers; appointed brigadier-general of volunteers in 1862 and died October 21, 1890.

[2] Born in Hungary in 1825; a youthful officer of the Austrian army previous to 1848 when he took part in the unsuccessful Hungarian revolution. After an exile in Germany and England he came to America in 1859 and became a journalist in New York City. Was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the Eighth New York Volunteers in 1861, and was later made brigadier and major-general of volunteers. After the Civil War he was in the United States consular service in Japan and China until 1885, when he returned to America where he died December 4, 1912.

from which point they were to march southward under Major-General E. O. C. Ord, United States Volunteers, and unite with Crook, the objective being the cutting of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad, an important Confederate line of communication.

Very early in April, Light Battery B, Fifth Artillery, was ordered to entrain for Webster, West Virginia, from which place it marched to Grafton, four miles distant, for the purpose of taking part in the Ord expedition, which, however, was abandoned soon afterwards on account of Sigel's failure to cooperate, upon which Ord asked to be relieved. The latter's statement in regard to this matter was in part as follows: "I found myself directed to command an important expedition through the heart of Virginia, planned by General Grant, the men, material, and details to be provided by the general commanding the Department (Sigel) . . . The success of the expedition depended as much upon its strength and organization as upon its proper management after starting. I made up my mind to make no complaints to my department commander, and when I found what sort of force he had provided, this left me to choose either failure and defeat, or a recommendation that my expedition be abandoned. . . . Reports to this effect were made to General Grant at the same time that I requested to be relieved. The force allowed me by General Sigel was about *one-half what he was directed should be the least force of my column,* and when I informed him (Sigel) that he was to come to a certain point with supplies that my men might not starve, he stated to me in so many

words, 'I don't think I shall do it. I don't think I shall do it.' "[1]

Upon the relief of Ord, Sigel was directed to take command of all his disposable troops and move up the Valley to effect a junction with Crook at Staunton or some point in its vicinity.

Leaving Grafton on the 21st of April the battery entrained for Martinsburg and a week after its arrival there marched with the rest of Sullivan's division to Bunker Hill, a small village on the Valley turnpike, about ten miles from Martinsburg, whence it moved to Winchester which was reached on the 1st of May, and, after a halt of some ten days, marched at 6:00 A.M. on the 11th to Woodstock where our advance guard first came in contact with the enemy.

In order to ascertain the strength and position of the Confederates under Imboden, who was reported to be at Rude's Hill on the other side of the North Fork of the Shenandoah, Sigel ordered Colonel Moor, a capable officer who commanded the First infantry brigade, to make a reconnaissance in force on the 14th, a movement which led to the battle of Newmarket on the following day.

As two of the four regiments of Moor's brigade were absent on escort duty with the train, he was not strong enough to make the reconnaissance with his two remaining regiments. Such being the case, the natural procedure would have been to send the other brigade under Thoburn, who was thoroughly acquainted with the ground and later com-

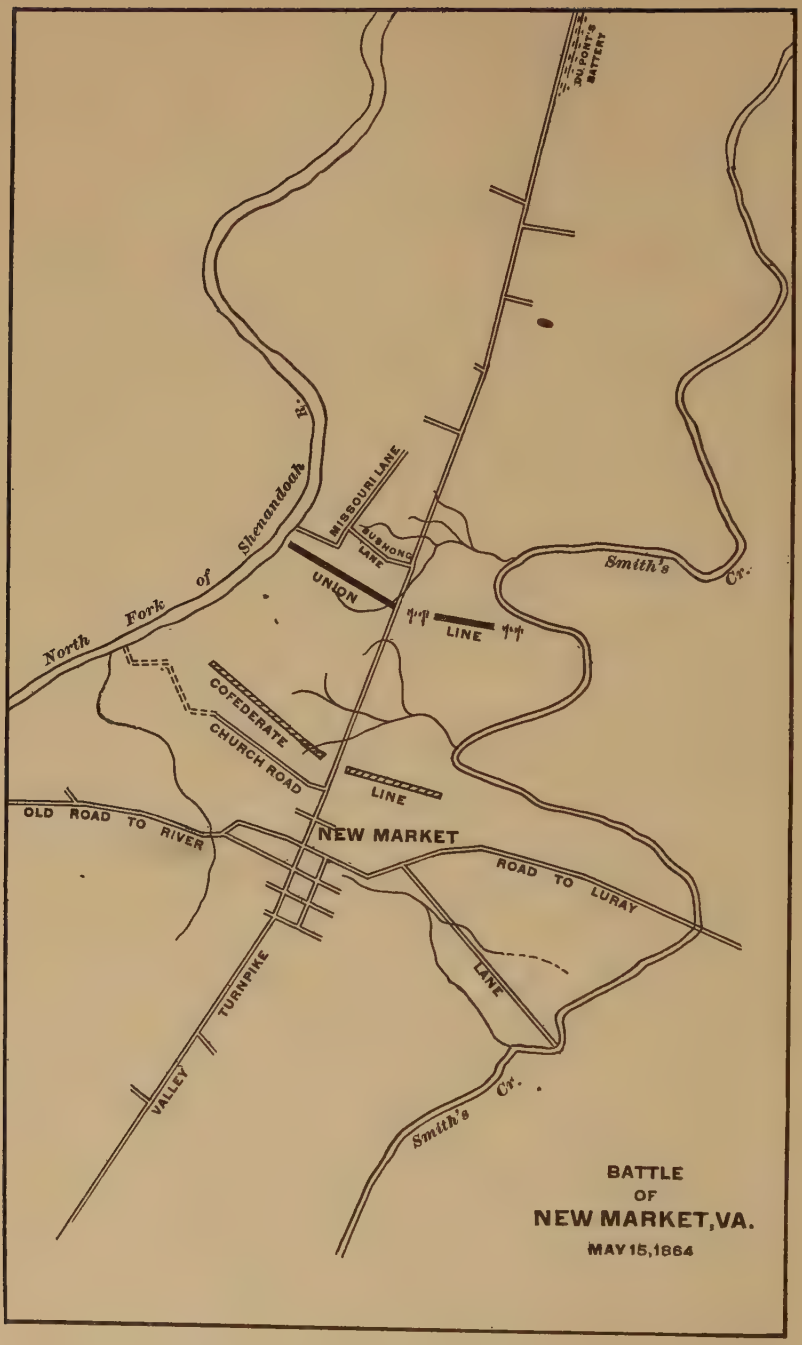
[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, pp. 526-7. (The *italics* are the author's.)

manded a division of Crook's corps at the battles of Winchester and Fisher's Hill as well as at Cedar Creek where he was killed. This did not, however, accord with the views of General Sigel, who had made up his mind that the reconnaissance should be commanded by a fellow-German, and to make up for Moor's deficiency in numbers, he took away two of Thoburn's regiments and ordered them to report to Moor. This breaking up of brigades gave rise to confusion at the opening of the conflict, and Moor himself stated in his report that it was a great mistake not to have let him take the regiments of his own brigade.[1]

[1] *Life with the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry*, by Col. Wm. S. Lincoln, p. 289.

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE OF NEWMARKET


DU PONT'S BATTERY
MISSOURI LANE
KUSHONG LANE
UNION
LINE
Smith's Cr.
North Fork of Shenandoah R.
CONFEDERATE
CHURCH ROAD
LINE
OLD ROAD TO RIVER
NEW MARKET
ROAD TO LURAY
LANE
VALLEY TURNPIKE
Smith's Cr.
BATTLE
OF
NEW MARKET, VA.
MAY 15, 1864

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE OF NEWMARKET

THE battle of Newmarket, which was fought on Sunday, May 15, 1864, resulted in Sigel's complete defeat with casualties of 835 in killed, wounded and prisoners. I participated in this engagement, which began about 9:30 A. M., as first lieutenant and adjutant of the Fifth Regular artillery, in command of Light Battery B of that regiment, and my narrative is mainly devoted to a recital of the services rendered by that battery and is supplementary to the very full and accurate accounts of the battle given by Turner,[1] Colonna [2] and other Confederate writers. The part taken in the Newmarket conflict by the artillery unit under my command is not mentioned in the official records: it belonged, as already stated, to General Sullivan's First infantry division, and if he made any reports, there is no trace of their existence, while those submitted by General Sigel shortly after the engagement were very brief and did not go into details. In the exceedingly full account, however, which the latter prepared some years afterwards for the "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," his sole reference to the Regular battery was as follows: "The Du Pont battery took position behind the

[1] *The Newmarket Campaign*, by Prof. Edward Raymond Turner.
[2] *The Battle of Newmarket*, by B. A. Colonna, in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, Nov.-Dec., 1912.

right of Thoburn's brigade as a reserve."[1] This statement is absolutely without foundation in fact, as my battery was not in that part of the field at all but, to the very keen disappointment of its officers and men, had been detained by General Sullivan's personal order until approximately 2:30 P. M., at a point on the Valley turnpike about a mile and a half from the battlefield. Except as just stated, Sigel's article does not make any other reference to the Regular battery and he is absolutely silent in regard to the part it took in covering the retreat of the Union forces, which was apparently due to his habitual carelessness and lack of information in regard to the details of his command. My narrative, therefore, is not only a contribution to the history of the campaign but an act of justice to the personnel of Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery, and as it is fully confirmed by the statements of others, Sigel's failure to further mention the battery cannot detract from the weight to be accorded to my testimony.

Turner, Colonna and other Confederate writers having described in great detail every phase of the conflict up to the time when the battery went into action, it is only necessary to say here that Sigel's line of battle, in its final position, was about a mile north of Newmarket and perpendicular to the turnpike, with his right flank resting on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and his left on Smith's Creek and that the disposition of his troops, from right to left, was as follows: Snow's battery on the extreme right, with Carlin's battery next to it and on its left, then Thoburn's infantry

[1] "Sigel in the Shenandoah Valley," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. IV, p. 489.

brigade, composed of the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts, the First West Virginia and the Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania Volunteers in the order named, together with the Twelfth West Virginia Volunteers, which was in a second line for the support of the batteries. The One hundred and twenty-third Ohio and the Eighteenth Connecticut Volunteers of Moor's brigade were on Thoburn's left and, next to them came Von Kleiser's battery, while the cavalry division under Stahel extended from Von Kleiser's position to the creek, Ewing's Horse battery being on our extreme left.

In addition to the total casualties in killed, wounded and prisoners, as heretofore related, Sigel lost five pieces of artillery—one of Von Kleiser's was dismounted by the Confederate fire and was abandoned after an ineffectual effort had been made to carry it off the field swung under a limber, while another of his guns and three of Carlin's were taken by the enemy, as they could not be withdrawn after the horses had been shot down.

With the exception of a few infantry units which retained their formation as they fell back, and of a portion of the artillery, the Union forces fled precipitately, and in the utmost disorder, until they reached Rude's Hill about four miles to the rear. At that point Generals Sigel, Stahel and Sullivan, after great exertions, rallied them behind the two Ohio regiments which had not taken part in the battle. Our beaten army then fell back across the North Fork of the Shenandoah, but Sigel did not attempt to make a stand at the bridge though the position was defensible. The retreat was continued for another mile to Mount Jackson, our troops being halted on the other side of Mill Creek, a

tributary of the above river, where, to use Sigel's own words, "we were perfectly safe, as the creek was high and could not be forded." [1] Notwithstanding this assertion, it is plain that his apprehensions were by no means allayed, as he ordered a further retreat, beginning at 9:30 P. M., and after an all-night march, his army reached Edinburg about 7:00 A. M. on the 16th, from which point, after halting for a few hours, he continued the retrograde movement (the Regular battery of course accompanying the rest of the division) until he arrived at Strasburg about 5:00 P. M. Early on the morning of the 17th, Sigel took a strong position north of Cedar Creek, which was "easily defensible against very large odds." [2]

In his brief official report to the Adjutant-General of the Army made the day after the battle, Sigel described the precipitate flight of his troops as a *gradual retirement* from the battlefield,[3] but in the subsequent account written a number of years later for the "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," he admitted that "there was some confusion and scattering of our retreating forces." All the same, however, the complete demoralization of most of his command not only came under my personal observation but was confirmed by his fellow-German, Colonel Moor, who stated in his official report that two of his regiments which did not take part in the battle (the Twenty-eighth and the One hundred and sixteenth Ohio Volunteers) joined him about 4:00 P. M. after being compelled to fix bayonets in order to

[1] *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War,* Vol. IV, p. 490.
[2] Letter from Colonel du Pont to his father, dated May 17, 1864.
[3] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 76. (The *italics* are the author's.)

clear their way on the turnpike through the "disgraceful fleeing masses of cavalry and straggling infantry." [1]

As a usual thing, highly conflicting statements have been made in regard to the number of men who actually took part on each side in the various engagements of the Civil War, and the battle of Newmarket was no exception. Sigel stated in his official report that the enemy's infantry alone was 7,000 strong—which, with about 1,100 or 1,200 cavalry and artillery (Turner's figures as given in his "Newmarket Campaign") would make the whole Confederate force about 8,150 men. In the "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," [2] Sigel, however, reduces this total to "7,000 men or thereabouts," while on the other hand, Turner puts the strength of the Confederate troops engaged at 4,500 men and those of Sigel at 6,000,[3] the last figure being no doubt based upon the actual strength of the Federal regiments as shown by the official returns. It is evident, however, that due allowance was not made for the large detachments required for the protection of the Union signal stations and very heavy train which, in addition to the supplies for Sigel's command, included 200 wagons for the troops under Crook.

We may observe that the situation of the contending forces with respect to their lines of communication was radically different. While the Confederates had nothing to fear, those of the Union army were in constant danger of attack from Mosby's partisan troops who were always

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 80.
[2] *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. IV, p. 488.
[3] *The Newmarket Campaign*, by Prof. Edward Raymond Turner, pp. 114 and 111.

ready to sally forth from some secure retreat in the mountain ranges on either side of the Valley; and in this particular instance, Colonel Mosby has expressly reported that he had sent "two detachments under Captains Richards and Chapman to embarrass Sigel as much as possible." [1]

It can be clearly shown by the official reports that Turner's figure of 6,000 Federal troops who actually participated in the battle is much too high. We have seen that there were two brigades of four regiments each in Sullivan's infantry division—a total of eight regiments, two of which, as is not disputed, were not in the battle, leaving six regiments that actually fought. Inasmuch as three companies of the Eighteenth Connecticut Volunteers were detached as a guard to the Union signal station, "somewhat less than 350" [2] men of that regiment were in the battle, while in the Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania Volunteers the number of "officers and men in the engagement was 566." [3] In the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteers, "the detachment of one company" (as skirmishers) "*with other details* left about 450 muskets in line," [4] or about 50 men to each of the nine remaining companies. Allowing 50 muskets and two musicians to the detached company and adding the two officers who are known to have been with it, we have a total of 54, which, with the 450 muskets reported by the regimental commander, Colonel Wells, makes 504 men; and increasing this figure

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 3.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 87.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 85. (The *italics* are the author's.)

by the sergeant-major, two color bearers and 18 company musicians, together with the 25 officers reported by name as having been present, we have a total of 550 officers and men. This gives us 1,466 men for the three units just mentioned, comprising one-half of the Federal infantry, and it is safe to say that the aggregate of those belonging to the three remaining units which took part in the conflict was not more (and in all likelihood less) than 1,698 men, or 566 for each unit, making a grand total of 3,164 infantry. Further, Turner puts the Union cavalry at 1,000 men (which agrees with the number given in the "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War") and the Union artillery at 300, and if we accept these figures we have a total of only 4,464 instead of 6,000. Turner's estimated strength of the Federal artillery, however, is too low, as it can be readily computed that nearly 350 artillerists must have taken part in the fighting instead of 300, and counting the 50 in excess it will be seen that the strength of the opposing forces was about equal. In view of the very liberal estimates made as to the strength of the three Union infantry regiments concerning which we have no detailed figures, there seems to be a reasonable probability that the number of Southern combatants may have slightly exceeded those of the North, which, if correct, makes a worse showing for Sigel's generalship, indicating as it does the extent of his failure to concentrate his whole command, which exceeded that of Breckinridge by at least 1,000 or 1,500 men.

At 5:00 A. M. on Sunday morning (May 15th), Sullivan's division, of which my battery formed a part, began its movement on the turnpike towards Mount Jackson,

arriving there about 10:00 A. M. and, crossing the bridge over the North Fork of the Shenandoah, continued its march southward. About 11:00 A. M. we heard some cannonading towards the front, to which not much attention was paid, as it was generally known that a reconnaissance in force was being made. Extraordinary as it may seem, General Sullivan evidently had not been informed of the impending battle, as our march was not hastened and before noon, when we were not far from Newmarket, he ordered a half-hour's halt to give the men time to eat their rations.

The weather was extremely hot and sultry, with intermittent showers, and my battery horses, white with lather, seemed so thirsty that, as soon as the halt was ordered, I asked and received General Sullivan's personal permission to unhitch and send them, in charge of an officer, to drink at a little stream—commonly known as a "branch" in Virginia—some four or five hundred yards to the west of the turnpike. While my horses were drinking, an order came from General Sigel to send him two batteries as rapidly as possible, upon which Sullivan immediately ordered forward Carlin and Von Kleiser, at the same time informing me that the Regular battery would have been one of those sent had not its horses been unhitched. A few minutes later, when the battery was in complete readiness, a second order arrived directing Sullivan to move at once with his *infantry,* but to my extreme surprise and disappointment, he interpreted this order literally and, as my battery was not specifically mentioned, directed it to remain where it was, but said that he would send for it as soon as

he reached the front, which he failed to do. Sigel claims[1] to have given directions to Sullivan through Captains McEntee and Putnam of his staff "to bring forward *all* of his troops without delay," but this statement is manifestly not correct.

Later very heavy firing was heard, indicating that the engagement was in full progress, but still no orders were received and I became excessively uneasy fearing that my command would not get into action. Finally, after a delay which seemed endless, the order came, when the battery instantly moved to the front at a sharp gallop, arriving on the battlefield between 2:30 and 3:00 P. M.

As we drew near the scene of conflict, I directed the caissons to draw out of the column and go into park at a suitable distance in rear under the command of Quartermaster-Sergeant Robert Sauthoff. Pushing forward then with my six pieces the whole Federal line was found to be retreating in the greatest disorder, save a few regiments to the west of the turnpike which were keeping up their formation as they fell back.[2] On the east side of that highway, the Union forces were in total rout and making for the rear in the wildest confusion—infantry and cavalry mingled with what was left of Von Kleiser's battery which had become completely disorganized after being very badly mauled by the fire of ten Confederate 3-inch rifled guns under McLaughlin.

No general officer was in sight, but I was at once pounced upon by a number of young and inexperienced

[1] B. L., Vol. IV, p. 489. (The *italics* are the author's.)
[2] Among them were the Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania and the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteers.

staff officers who proceeded to give me (upon their own initiative but in the names of Generals Sigel or Stahel) the most absurd and contradictory orders with respect to putting the battery in position. In speaking of the youth of most of these officers, it occurs to me that I myself was not twenty-six at the time, but common sense, reenforced by eight years of continuous military instruction and military discipline, made it easy to reach an instant decision as to what ought to be done, and, although under fire for the first time in my life, I then and there made up my mind to ignore the conflicting instructions and to take such measures as seemed right and proper. In brief, I was compelled to act, and did act, upon my own judgment and of course assumed all responsibility. This was the last that was seen of the staff officers just mentioned, who evidently went promptly to the rear with the rest of Sigel's forces, and from that time forward until shortly before 9:00 o'clock at night, when the division marched from Woodstock, I had to depend entirely upon myself *and did not receive a single order, either directly or indirectly, from any military superior!*

The battery was in the open and entirely without support, but a thick curtain of smoke which hung over the field prevented the Confederates from discovering this fact, and it seemed necessary to risk the loss of some of my guns in order to cover and protect the retreat of the Union troops. The leading platoon (two guns) under Second Lieutenant Charles Holman, was at once put in position close to the turnpike and on its west side, and instantly opened fire. Taking advantage of this, I ordered the other four pieces to

fall back and put the center platoon, commanded by First Sergeant Samuel D. Southworth, in position some five or six hundred yards to the rear and immediately on the east of the turnpike, with orders to open fire as soon as he was unmasked by Holman. Indicating a slight swell of the ground at about the same distance still further to the rear, I instructed Second Lieutenant Benjamin F. Nash, commanding the left platoon, to go into position at that point. These dispositions, known in the tactics of that day as a retirement "by echelon of platoons," consumed but a very few moments, when I galloped back to the front and remained with Lieutenant Holman's pieces which continued to fire with great rapidity and precision until we found ourselves entirely alone, with not a single Federal soldier in sight save the members of our own battery. Telling Holman that he had "to get out of this" and ordering him to go back at a gallop and take the best position he could find some 500 or 600 yards behind Nash's platoon, I joined Southworth, a most promising and handsome young soldier who five months later (as an officer) fell at the battle of Cedar Creek. With the utmost steadiness and accuracy, he opened on the enemy as soon as Holman's platoon had passed and kept up a rapid fire until his own platoon was likewise left entirely isolated, when he received orders similar to those already given to Holman. I then joined the left platoon under Nash, who opened promptly in his turn and continued to fire until he fell back by my direction, when Holman began firing for the second time. My recollection is that neither Southworth nor Nash opened again, as the enemy had apparently discontinued his

advance, though we were still under Confederate artillery fire.

Colonel Moor has stated in his official report that he formed some troops on the turnpike to the right and left of a battery. He no doubt referred either to Snow's battery or to Carlin's, as both of these units were falling back at the time, and Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery, did not come in contact with any infantry command, being entirely without support throughout the whole battle.

In order to be in the best possible position for defence if the Confederate advance continued, the caissons were directed to precede the pieces on the turnpike and the movement was maintained by echelon of platoons until we reached, about sundown (7:05 P. M.), the bridge over the North Fork of the Shenandoah, which we found absolutely deserted. To my extreme surprise, no rear guard had been left at that important point after the bulk of the Union troops had crossed, nor was any officer of General Sigel's staff on hand to take cognizance of the situation and report as to the withdrawal of his command to the north bank of the river.

In view of the precipitate retreat and demoralization of our troops, it seemed prudent to take steps to prevent the enemy from crossing the river during the night, and though there were no orders in regard to the bridge, I took the responsibility of partially destroying it, but never received subsequently either commendation or censure with respect to my action. The pieces, caissons and forge passed to the other side, but the battery wagon was retained and

Quartermaster-Sergeant Sauthoff, with the artificers of the battery, assisted by some cannoneers, proceeded to take the tools which the wagon carried and tear up the bridge floor preparatory to setting it on fire.

While this was going on, a troop of volunteer cavalry remained in close column to the east of the bridge, but too far away for oral communication, and when a bugler was sent to notify the officer in command (name and regiment then unknown) that we were about to destroy the bridge and that it would be necessary for his command to cross the river immediately, he moved with an apparent reluctance which was hard to understand at the time and passed within a few feet of me without any recognition whatever. The incident had almost passed from my memory, when, upon reading, some twenty years later, Sigel's paper on the battle of Newmarket,[1] the name of the officer in question was revealed as well as the probable cause of his displeasure. He evidently wanted his troop to be the last Federal unit to cross the bridge, and though my decision to destroy it had unintentionally deprived him of that dubious honor, he received it all the same, rather tardily to be sure, at the hands of General Sigel, who stated in his account that "Captain Battersby's company was the last to cross the bridge." As the planking was removed and then set on fire under my immediate supervision, it fell to my lot to be the last person to cross; but no special credit was involved, as we were not under fire at the time and the enemy had wholly discontinued his pursuit.

[1] "Sigel in the Shenandoah Valley," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. IV, p. 487.

Although the battle of Newmarket was of comparatively little importance, either with respect to the numbers engaged or the results attained, it was an episode of the Civil War which has always aroused special interest in Virginia, largely due to the fact that the youthful cadets of the Virginia Military Institute had participated so valiantly in that engagement. As time went on, the various features of the conflict were frequently discussed by those who had fought on the Confederate side, and, incidentally, the part taken by the unit under my command in covering the retreat of the Union forces was fully recognized. Finally, an article on the battle of Newmarket which appeared some years ago in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution,* did ample justice to the Regular battery, the author having participated in the fighting on the Southern side as cadet captain of Company D of the Virginia Military Institute battalion.[1] Later, Turner, in his history of the Newmarket campaign, has stated that the battery "did excellent service, firing into the enemy and withdrawing slowly by platoons;" [2] and lastly, Colonel J. C. Wise, in a most appreciative article entitled "Field Artillery in Rear Guard Action," [3] has given a detailed account of the part taken by my battery in the battle of Newmarket as an illustration of his subject. Both of the magazine articles, which are perhaps too laudatory in their tone, entirely corroborate my narrative, and the first named paper, by Benjamin A. Colonna, has exceptional weight as coming from the pen of an eye-witness.

[1] "The Battle of Newmarket," by B. A. Colonna, in *Journal of the Military Service Institution,* Nov.-Dec., 1912.
[2] N.M.C., p. 93.
[3] *Field Artillery Journal,* Nov.-Dec., 1922, p. 502.

Because of the thick smoke which shrouded the battlefield, it was difficult to determine the effect of the fire of the battery, and although my conviction was that the results had been good, Colonna's article revealed the fact that I had "builded better than I knew." His statement is as follows: "The enemy was now, say 2:45 P. M., retreating everywhere in great disorder, and our pursuit continued until about 3:00 P. M., when we found ourselves in front of Du Pont's Battery B, Fifth Regular Artillery. The audacity of this Battery caused us to think that it had a strong infantry support and we paused to form line before advancing further. This caused a delay of fifteen or twenty minutes and allowed the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts, the Twelfth West Virginia and the Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania, and perhaps some other troops, time enough to slip through to freedom." [1]

The movements of the Union troops under Sigel during the twenty-four hours which preceded the battle were of special importance, since they served to determine the precise location of the conflict as well as the approximate moment when the fighting was to begin. As previously stated, late on the 14th Sigel had very properly ordered a reconnaissance in force under Colonel Moor to procure all the information possible in regard to the strength and disposition of the enemy's forces. Imboden, the Confederate general, fell back upon Moor's advance, whereupon the latter crossed the bridge over the Shenandoah and pushed on as far as Newmarket, twenty miles south of Woodstock, which he held at dark, having learned

[1] *Journal of the Military Service Institution,* Nov.-Dec., 1912.

positively that Breckinridge with his reenforcements had joined Imboden—which information was in the possession of the Federal commander-in-chief late that night as he himself admitted.[1]

Having ascertained what he wanted to know, Sigel should have promptly ordered Moor to fall back to the crossing of the North Fork of the Shenandoah, or perhaps to Mount Jackson (seven miles distant), as all the Union troops could have been more rapidly concentrated at either locality; but instead of doing this, he left the comparatively small force under Moor to face the entire Confederate army until he could personally reconnoiter the terrain and decide whether he should "meet the enemy's attack" [2] near Newmarket or at Mount Jackson.

Sigel, as it would seem, did not reach the front until about 10:00 A. M. on the morning of the battle, Lang stating that "with his staff and bodyguard" he "came on the ground with a great flourish." [3] Had not two or three hours' delay been gained by the skilful maneuvering of the Union troops in the early morning, which led the enemy to believe that the whole Federal army had arrived, Moor's comparatively small force would have been pushed northward and perhaps crushed by the advance of Breckinridge's entire command. As matters turned out, however, this delay was probably advantageous to the Confederates, for otherwise Sigel would have been compelled to make his stand at Mount Jackson or even farther north where his

[1] *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War,* Vol. IV, p. 488.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Loyal West Virginia,* p. 114, by Major Theodore F. Lang, of the Sixth West Virginia Cavalry, temporarily serving on Sigel's staff.

troops of necessity would have been more easily concentrated.

Having succeeded, however, in making an examination of the ground, he resolved to risk a battle near Newmarket, the prime factors which prompted this conclusion, according to his own statement, being the strategic importance of that place and the discouragement which would be caused by the withdrawal of the troops under Moor, who had reported that his position was very good:[1] as a further reason, Sigel claimed that Lang had asserted that the troops were "eager for the fight,"[2] although the last named makes no mention of this in his book.

To any professional soldier, the above reasons would seem entirely inadequate, and it goes without saying that instead of devoting so much time and thought to reconnoitering the country and considering the strategic aspects of the case, he should have given his chief attention to the concentration of his troops and to seeing that they were not physically exhausted and suffering from hunger, as was the condition of some of the Union infantry regiments in the battle of Newmarket.[3]

The causes of Sigel's defeat are not difficult to ascertain. It is essential, as Jomini has long since pointed out, that a good commander should "maneuver in such a way as to engage the mass of his own force with fractions of the hostile army." Breckinridge acted on this principle, while Sigel seems to have had no conception of its existence. At 5:00 A. M. on the morning of the battle, Breckinridge's

[1] *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. IV, p. 488.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 81.

troops were well in hand and massed a little south of Newmarket, while at the very same hour, Sullivan's division, comprising the main body of the Union infantry with eighteen pieces of artillery, was just beginning its march from Woodstock, twenty miles away, leaving behind (on train escort duty) two regiments, constituting one-half of its First brigade. These units were not relieved and ordered to the front until 8:00 A. M.,[1] too late to take part in the fight, which did not prevent Sigel, however, from stating that he had "no doubt that the battle would have ended differently if the two regiments, *which I had good reason to believe were near,* had arrived in time to assist us." [2]

In addition to the confusion due to the temporary breaking up of the infantry brigades when the reconnaissance in force was ordered, Sigel made a further and even more serious error in regard to the posting of his batteries, a matter which seems to have escaped attention in previous accounts of the battle.

As heretofore stated, the Federal artillery consisted of Du Pont's, Snow's and Carlin's batteries, each with six 3-inch rifled pieces—of Von Kleiser's battery of six Napoleon guns, and of Ewing's Horse battery (four 3-inch rifled guns, commanded by Lieutenant Morton) on the extreme left of the Federal line.

Snow was on the high ground held by the Union right, which was the key to the Federal position, and when Carlin and Von Kleiser reached the battlefield, Sigel posted Carlin,

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 80.
[2] *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War,* Vol. IV, p. 490. (The *italics* are the author's.)

whose rifled guns were similar to Snow's, immediately on the latter's left; and Von Kleiser, with his six Napoleon guns, on a slight elevation near the turnpike in the center of the line, this being no doubt deemed the more prominent and important position: in his anxiety to give the best place to the German battery, it is evident that Sigel entirely overlooked the fact that because of the shorter range of its Napoleon guns the fire of the Confederate 3-inch rifled pieces could not be effectively returned. Had Von Kleiser been put next to Snow, on the Union right, when the Confederates made their assault on that flank, the canister fire of the former would have been much more effective than that of Carlin by reason of the larger caliber of his pieces; and had Sigel placed Du Pont's and Carlin's batteries in the position assigned to Von Kleiser, these units could have easily held their own against McLaughlin's ten rifled guns and, from an artillery standpoint, the result in all probability would have been very different and might have turned the scale in favor of the Federal forces.

Although Du Pont's Regular battery was on the turnpike and within some fifteen minutes' march from the battlefield, it was held back by General Sullivan's positive orders until after 2:30 P. M., when the Union forces were just giving way. The six guns of this battery comprised more than one-fifth of the Union artillery, but Sigel, as he personally put the batteries in position, does not appear to have noticed its absence, although he ought to have known the number of guns under his command.

In a publication entitled "The Positions and Movements of the Troops in the Battle of Newmarket" by Colonel G.

H. Smith of the Confederate service, it is erroneously stated [1] that portions of Carlin's battery took part in the reconnaissance in force under Moor. The artillery with Moor consisted of two platoons of Snow's battery, while Carlin's entire unit, to my personal knowledge, marched with the division from Woodstock at 5:00 A. M. on the 15th and only entered the battle when sent forward by General Sullivan as previously related.

Without a chief of artillery, the Federal batteries seem to have rendered as good service and to have accomplished as much as could have been possibly expected, where complete unity of effort was unattainable, and the Confederate reports stated that the individual action of these batteries was highly effective. It is to be noted that Ewing's Horse battery was not able to take a prominent part in the battle, as when Stahel's cavalry was disastrously routed after an abortive charge, the battery was forced to fall back, and Colonna tells us that it accompanied Stahel who moved along the westerly bank of Smith's Creek with a small cavalry force watching Imboden's movements on the other side of that stream.[2]

The enemy had eighteen pieces of artillery, four of which belonged to Imboden's cavalry and cut but very little figure in the engagement. Of the remaining pieces, all of which had a much longer range than Von Kleiser's Napoleons, ten 3-inch rifled guns (including two which belonged to the Virginia Military Institute) under the immediate command of Major McLaughlin, the Confed-

[1] Pp. 21 and 22.
[2] *The Battle of Newmarket,* by B. A. Colonna, in *Journal of the Military Service Institution,* Nov.-Dec., 1912, p. 348.

erate chief of artillery, were concentrated upon Von Kleiser's battery and did great execution, dismounting one of his pieces.

In addition to Sigel's many shortcomings, both in strategy and grand tactics, the military administration of his command was very far from working smoothly and efficiently. His spectacular appearances on horseback surrounded by a brilliant but largely incompetent staff and followed by a cavalry escort, did not succeed, as he had apparently hoped would be the case, in inspiring the confidence and good will of those under him. The general feeling at the time seems to have been largely reflected in the following brief extract from a personal letter written by a Union officer two days after the battle: "I have anticipated something of the kind all along" (Sigel's defeat) "as everything has been very badly mismanaged, in my opinion," [1] and Major Lang says: "Sigel had sufficient troops to have beaten the Confederates under Breckinridge had he brought them into the fight; but permitted his splendidly equipped army to be beaten and hurled down the Valley, with a loss of about 600 killed and wounded." [2]

So manifest was the incapacity displayed by Sigel during his brief direction of military affairs in the Valley of Virginia that we may take it for granted that the Secretary of War felt obliged to relieve him. On the 19th of May, four days after the battle of Newmarket, Major-General David Hunter, United States Volunteers, was assigned to the command of the Department of West Virginia and arrived

[1] Letter of May 17, 1864, from Col. du Pont to his father.
[2] *Loyal West Virginia*, by Major T. F. Lang, p. 114.

at Strasburg on the evening of the 21st, when he at once took charge. Hunter undoubtedly was a much better soldier than his predecessor, who remained on duty in the Department at the request of the Washington authorities,[1] this being probably a tribute to Sigel's popularity among the German voters throughout the United States.

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part II, p. 340.

CHAPTER III

FROM NEWMARKET TO PIEDMONT

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UPON assuming command of the Department of West Virginia, General Hunter was only two months short of sixty-two years of age, but so strong and robust physically that he was able to endure the extraordinary privations and excessive fatigues of the Lynchburg campaign with but a single break of about twenty-four hours.

A man of middle height, with broad shoulders and very swarthy complexion, the expression of his somewhat prominent features was stern and severe; but he was free from affectation and his manner was tranquil except when disturbed by fits of sudden anger which were by no means infrequent. Unfortunately, his mentality was largely dominated by prejudices and antipathies so intense and so violent as to render him at times quite incapable of taking a fair and unbiased view of many military and political situations. Having once made up his mind either as to present events or as to a forecast of those to come, he never swerved, and nothing but the cold logic of accomplished facts could induce him to modify his opinions in the slightest degree. Aspiring, energetic and self-reliant, his bold and rather aggressive temperament, as well as his intolerant ideas, often gave rise to unpleasant relations

with others, whom he did not hesitate to criticise and denounce in the plainest terms, and this was especially true with respect to those associated with him on the Union side during the Civil War.

Appointed in 1818 to the United States Military Academy from his native State of New Jersey, he graduated from that institution four years later and served almost continuously on the western frontier in the infantry and dragoons. After fighting several duels at the outset of his military career, he was tried by court-martial for sending a challenge to his commanding officer and sentenced to be dismissed from the service, which penalty, however, was remitted by President John Quincy Adams. In 1836 he resigned his captaincy in the Regular Army and after six years of private life reentered the service in 1842 as a major and paymaster, in which capacity he served until the beginning of the Civil War.

In the olden time there was an unwritten and self-imposed law or regulation which very sensibly prohibited the officers of the Regular Army from taking any active part in politics. This did not prevent them, however, from being highly patriotic American citizens and from interesting themselves most keenly in every question which affected the welfare of our country. Upon reentering the Regular service in 1842, Major Hunter, as he was then called, was almost alone in disregarding the wise policy which his brother officers had followed with practical unanimity in the past. He took sides in the political dissensions of that day as well as in the bitter partisan disputes which arose in Kansas several years later, and in spite of the fact that he

had numerous relatives south of Mason and Dixon's line and that his father, a Presbyterian clergyman, was a member of the prominent Virginia family of that name, as well as a native of the Old Dominion, Major Hunter became a most pronounced and vehement opponent of the institution of slavery.

When Abraham Lincoln set out for Washington previous to his inauguration in 1861, our new Department commander was one of those who accompanied him and his relations with War Secretary Stanton became exceedingly close and intimate. No surprise, therefore, was occasioned when he was appointed colonel of the Third Cavalry, a new Regular regiment raised in May of that year, this promotion being soon followed by the appointments of brigadier-general and of major-general of Volunteers. As colonel of the above regiment, he commanded a division of Volunteer troops at the battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861, and although severely wounded at the very outset of the conflict, he submitted an official report commending by name every member of his divisional staff and characterizing as "perfectly beautiful" the conduct under fire of his nephew and aide, Lieutenant Samuel W. Stockton of the First Regular Cavalry.[1]

Upon recovering from his wound, Hunter was assigned to the Western Department and served as second in command under Frémont, whom he succeeded when the latter was relieved from duty in the following November. A few days later, however, when orders came transferring General Hunter to the Department of Kansas which for the moment was not the theater of active military operations,

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. II, p. 382-3.

he at once imagined that he was being shelved, and his passionate and ambitious nature was stirred to the boiling point. On the 23rd of December, 1861, in defiance of military regulations, he laid his case directly before President Lincoln, presuming no doubt upon their past personal relations. In a kindly but plain-spoken reply, Lincoln characterized Hunter's communication as an "ugly letter" and added that he was "losing much of the great confidence" he had placed in him since perusing the "flood of grumbling despatches and letters" which had been sent through official channels. Continuing, President Lincoln remarked that "it had never occurred to me that you were being *'humiliated, insulted and disgraced'* "[1] and then went on to say that "you are adopting the best possible way to ruin yourself."[2]

Notwithstanding the impairment of Presidential confidence, General Hunter stood as high as ever in the good opinion of Secretary Stanton who, three months later, selected him to relieve Major-General Thomas W. Sherman, United States Volunteers, as commander of the Department of the South, which was under the immediate control of the War Department. When General Hunter took over his new command, March 31, 1862, the principal military operation then in progress was the siege of Fort Pulaski, near Savannah, Georgia, conducted by the military forces of the Department assisted by a naval contingent from Flag-Officer Du Pont's fleet.[3] The investment of the place had begun during the last days of January and

[1] The *italics* are the author's.
[2] O. R. Series I, Vol. LIII, p. 511.
[3] Gillmore's report, April 30, 1863, to the Chief of Engineers, U.S.A.

the siege had been steadily pushed forward under the auspices of General Thomas W. Sherman, a life-long artillery officer of the Regular Army. Upon the surrender of the fort on the 11th of April, Hunter warmly commended in general orders the engineer officer in charge, Major-General Quincy A. Gillmore, but made no mention whatever of any member of the Department staff, several of whom as former artillery officers of the Regular Army, had personally volunteered for the siege operations and had rendered most efficient service.

On the day after the surrender, upon his own authority and without the slightest consultation with his superiors in Washington, Hunter announced in general orders that "slavery and martial law were incompatible" and proclaimed the immediate enfranchisement of all slaves within the limits of his Department. Coupled with this action, notice was given of his intention to raise colored troops and he proceeded to organize the First South Carolina Volunteers, a negro regiment, which was supplied with arms, clothing and other necessaries by his direction. While Hunter's political views and opinions were unquestionably well known to Secretary Stanton, with whom he was on most friendly terms, it may be doubted whether the Secretary had realized how far and how fast the outspoken general was ready and willing to go.

As soon as President Lincoln heard of Hunter's political manifesto, he promptly issued a proclamation reciting that the government had no knowledge or part in the above orders which were altogether void and of no effect, and that neither he nor any other military commander had been

authorized to enfranchise the slaves of any state.[1] As the incident, however, had given Hunter great political notoriety throughout the country, it was probably not deemed expedient to relieve him from his command, while the action he had taken in regard to arming the negroes stirred up the Confederate government to the point of branding him as an outlaw and announcing in general orders that in the event of his capture he should not "be regarded as a prisoner of war but held in close confinement for execution as a felon." [2]

Military operations in front of Charleston being largely at a standstill during the hot months, General Hunter was recalled to Washington for consultation, and while there was appointed, September 23, 1862, president of a court of inquiry to investigate the causes of the surrender of Harpers Ferry. Later Secretary Stanton detailed him as president of the court-martial which convened some two months subsequently to try Major-General Fitz-John Porter, United States Volunteers, a selection which elicited much comment, as it was known that Hunter "particularly disliked and distrusted McClellan" [3] whose military and personal relations with General Porter were of the most close and intimate character.

During the following year, very greatly to his displeasure, Hunter was "temporarily" [4] relieved from the command of the Department of the South, June 12, 1863,

[1] O. R. Series III, Vol. II, p. 43.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 712.
[3] *Baked Meats of the Funeral*, p. 332, by Private Miles O'Reilly (Col. Chas. G. Halpine, Hunter's adjutant-general during his Valley campaign and expedition to Lynchburg).
[4] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVIII, Part II, p. 3.

and was succeeded by Gillmore who had distinguished himself in the taking of Fort Pulaski and in consequence was deemed equally capable of reducing Fort Sumter—a feat, however, which he was unable to perform. Upon being relieved, Hunter at once resumed his direct correspondence with President Lincoln and advised him that he "could not fail to be aware that the action taken has been all but universally regarded as a censure on my conduct while in that command" and that he therefore requested permission to make such publication of official documents and records as might be necessary "to set me right in the eyes of my friends and in the justice of history." [1] The President, in his reply, declined to favorably consider this request on the highly sensible ground that by giving his consent he would have to "assume the responsibility of whatever you (Hunter) may write," and ended by saying that "your own sense of military propriety must be your guide and the regulations of the service your rule of conduct." [2]

Having learned that the influence of Horace Greeley, the editor of the *New York Tribune,* had much to do with the "temporary" change of commanders in the Department of the South, Hunter's wrath was aroused and he proceeded to call Greeley to account. Forgetting that as a military man he himself had so recently taken a most pronounced stand in regard to political questions, Hunter denounced the interference in military affairs of a civilian like Greeley and told him that the "country must be informed that you have charge of the second attack on Charleston so that on

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XIV, p. 469.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 470.

you may rest the praise or censure."[1] So far as we can discover, no notice of this episode was ever taken by the War Department.

On the 31st of August, 1863, Hunter wrote a remarkable letter to Secretary Stanton expressing his apprehensions that slavery would be "fixed upon us forever" and asking whether this could not be "prevented by a general arming of the negroes and a general destruction of all the property of the slaveholders at the South." He further requested that he might be permitted "to take the men you can spare at this time, land at Brunswick and march through the heart of Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi to New Orleans, arming all the negroes and *burning the house and other property of every slaveholder.*"[2]

It is quite impossible to reconcile the sentiments just expressed with the existing conventions of civilized nations in regard to warlike operations, as Hunter's letter plainly advocated a return to the devastations of earlier days which, to the disgrace of modern civilization, were so barbarously exploited by the Germans in the late European war. Moreover, Hunter's specific recommendation in regard to "burning the house and other property of every slaveholder" was in direct violation of the President's order of July 22, 1862,[3] which while permitting Federal commanders to take over private property for military purposes in the former slave states, expressly provided that "none shall be destroyed in wantonness or malice." Further, the

[1] Report of Military Services of General D. Hunter, U.S.A., during the War of the Rebellion to the War Department, 1873, p. 46.
[2] O. R. Series III, Vol. III, p. 740. (The *italics* are the author's.)
[3] See General Orders No. 109 of War Department, August 16, 1862.

recommendation in question was obviously in plain and positive contradiction to the spirit of the stringent directions given by General Grant to Sigel [1] and by him turned over to Hunter, these having been prepared with a view to preventing all needless destruction of private property.

Having now given an outline of the previous career of the commander chosen by Secretary Stanton to replace Sigel as director of military affairs and administrator of martial law in the Valley of Virginia, let us next take up the story of Hunter's operations in the field from the date of his assumption of the command of the Department of West Virginia on the 21st of May, 1864.

Notwithstanding the fact that Sigel's incapacity had been so plainly demonstrated, the War Department seemed unable to muster up enough political courage to supersede him altogether and, as before mentioned, made a request (which was equivalent to an order) that he be retained on duty in the Department of West Virginia. Hunter accordingly sent him to Martinsburg and put him in charge of the general protection of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, having under his orders Generals B. F. Kelley and Max Weber, the latter another foreigner who had been unloaded upon our military establishment.

On the following day, May 22nd, the new Department commander wrote to the Adjutant-General of the Army asking that two energetic and efficient brigadiers be sent immediately to report to him in the field, setting forth that General Stahel, in command of the cavalry, "has had but little experience as a cavalry officer in this country, nor am

[1] *Campaigning with Grant*, by General Horace Porter, p. 236.

I aware that he has had any experience with cavalry elsewhere," and that "General Sullivan, in command of the infantry, may be a very excellent officer, but is also of limited experience."[1] This, however, did not prevent Hunter from telegraphing on the very same day to General Halleck, Chief of Staff of the Army, that "it would be impossible to exaggerate the inefficiency of General Stahel."[2] In the same telegram he asked that an experienced cavalry officer be sent to command his cavalry division, and urgently recommended that his nephew and aide, Lieutenant Samuel W. Stockton, be appointed a brigadier-general of Volunteers to command the Second brigade of that division, a request which was not granted. Lieutenant Stockton, whom I had occasion to meet very frequently, had been appointed from civil life in 1861 to a lieutenancy in the Regular Army: he was quiet and unassuming in manner and had the reputation of being a good and faithful officer.

On the 23rd of May, 1864, most unexpectedly to me, Hunter announced in special orders No. 103, Headquarters Department of West Virginia, that "the whole artillery of this command will report direct to the chief of artillery on the staff of the major-general commanding, and hereafter will be completely independent of brigade and division organizations."[3] At the same time he sent for me and inquired as to my status so far as rank was concerned. I told him that since the 24th of the preceding March I was a captain "de jure" of the Fifth Regiment of Regular Artil-

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 517.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 516.
[3] *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 525.

lery, being entitled by law to fill the vacancy which had occurred on that day, but that "de facto" I was still first lieutenant and adjutant of the regiment in question, inasmuch as the Senate had not acted, to my knowledge, upon the list of promotions in the Regular Army sent in some time previously and in which my name was included. After expressing astonishment at the delay of the Senate in confirming the promotions and his conviction that action must have been already taken, General Hunter stated that he intended to designate me as a captain of the Fifth United States Artillery and appoint me chief of artillery of the Department of West Virginia, which announcement was duly promulgated in general orders No. 31 on the following day, May 24, 1864.[1] I thanked him for his proposed action, which was not due, of course, to any personal interest in me, but to a desire to promote a more efficient organization of his own command.

As chief of artillery of the Department, I did not belong to Hunter's personal staff but became the immediate commander of the four mounted batteries constituting the so-called "artillery brigade" of our little army, consisting of Du Pont's, Snow's and Carlin's mounted batteries, each equipped with six 3-inch rifled guns, and of Von Kleiser's New York mounted battery of four Napoleon guns, a unit which had lost two of its pieces at Newmarket. My new appointment also made it incumbent upon me to report daily at Department headquarters and I frequently had occasion to confer with General Hunter on official business. Though cool and somewhat reserved in manner, he always treated

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 531.

me with civility and, most important of all, did not interfere, or allow anyone else to interfere, with the management of my command either in battle or elsewhere. Had not this been the case, the highly successful results attained by the artillery at the battles of Piedmont and Lynchburg could never have been realized. At the opening of these engagements I accompanied the staff until General Hunter had decided upon the dispositions of his troops, when I immediately joined my own command.

Having received some reenforcements, Hunter's southward movement in the Valley of Virginia began at Strasburg at 10:30 A. M., May 26th. The artillery brigade marched with the rest of the army and reached Woodstock on the 29th, Newmarket on the 30th and Harrisonburg on the evening of June 2nd, when it was ascertained that the Confederates occupied a strongly entrenched position at Mount Crawford, about eight miles southward, at the point where the Valley turnpike crosses the North River, a tributary of the South Fork of the Shenandoah. As the enemy's position seemed too strong for a direct attack, Hunter decided to turn it, and when our command marched on the next day, June 4th, the cavalry division which led continued its movement on the turnpike as far as the enemy's entrenchments at Mount Crawford and kept the Confederates on the alert while the infantry division and artillery brigade, taking a road to the left, crossed the North River at Port Republic a few miles below. Rain was falling and the ford was difficult, but we were able to get the batteries over safely and went into camp on the south side of the stream, the weather clearing during the night.

Like all previous commanders in the Valley, Hunter had been confronted with the problem of keeping his communications open with the army base at Harpers Ferry. As we have heretofore remarked, this was a very difficult task, as the mountain ranges which fringed the Valley afforded secure retreats for the enemy's partisan troops. These were regularly incorporated into the Confederate military establishment as a mounted battalion, officially known as the Forty-third Virginia Cavalry and commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Mosby, who was charged with the special duty of interfering as far as possible with the Union lines of communication. Apparently the only practical way of coping with the situation was to have our wagon trains always accompanied by properly commanded and adequate escorts. Such, however, was not the opinion of General Hunter, whose views were entirely different. He had reached the absolutely untenable conclusion that Mosby's command was composed of the men of military age who lived in the towns and villages along the Valley turnpike, although as a matter of fact there were very few of Mosby's men who were residents of those places.

With this fixed idea in mind, Hunter announced that any town or village would be burned to the ground if an attack upon our trains were made in its immediate vicinity, thereby destroying the homes of the miscreants who lived there and had participated in the attack.[1] It was entirely useless to point out to him that Mosby's command consisted wholly of cavalry which eliminated all those whose physical capacity or previous training rendered them unfit

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 528.

for mounted service, or to tell him that it was notorious that the Mosby men mainly consisted of volunteers from all parts of the Confederacy who were attracted by a spirit of adventure as well as by their exemption from the irksome routine and discipline of larger commands.

It so happened that just at the time of Hunter's movement southward, an attack was made upon a Federal wagon train not far from Newtown, Virginia, and that a quantity of army supplies had been destroyed. This greatly angered our Department commander who, on the 30th of May, while at Rude's Hill, near Newmarket, gave the commanding officer of the First New York (Lincoln) Cavalry, the following written instructions: "You will detail from your command 200 men, with the proper complement of commissioned officers, to proceed to Newtown to-morrow morning at 3:00 o'clock, for the purpose of burning every house, store, and out-building in that place, except the churches and the houses and out-buildings of those who are known to be loyal citizens of the United States. You will also burn the houses, etc., of all rebels between Newtown and Middletown." [1]

Newtown was a small village of some ten or twelve houses on the Valley turnpike in King and Queen County, Virginia, about eight miles south of Winchester, its sole inhabitants at that time being women and children with a sprinkling of old men and perhaps a few wounded and paroled Confederate soldiers. When the detachment arrived, June 1st, and its purpose became known, the popula-

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 557.

tion turned out en masse with heartrending lamentations and tearful protests.

The commander of the detachment, Major Joseph K. Stearns, in conjunction with all the officers present, conferred with the townspeople who showed that they had nursed with care the Union soldiers recently wounded in the attack on the wagon train, and that in addition they had evidence in the shape of private letters which conclusively proved that the absent male relatives were not members of Mosby's partisan force but belonged, as a rule, to regiments in the main Confederate army far from the Valley of Virginia. Stearns discovered also that he had to deal with a novel phase of the situation which was of supreme importance from a military standpoint. Murmurings of disapproval came from his own men who claimed that it was no part of a soldier's duty to burn the homes of non-combatant civilians, some going so far as to declare that they would obey no order to apply the torch. Finally, Stearns, who was a man of good sense and humanity, decided to spare the town notwithstanding his instructions and, upon rejoining his regiment at Strasburg on the 3rd of June, personally reported the facts to General Hunter who, in spite of his wrath, evidently found that he had gone too far and let the whole matter drop.[1]

[1] It was generally reported and believed that Hunter had ordered the dismissal of the officer who had failed to carry out his instructions in regard to the burning of Newtown, but this seems to have been an error, as no confirmatory evidence can be found in the records.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE OF PIEDMONT

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THE BATTLE OF PIEDMONT

AS previously stated, Hunter had turned the strong Confederate position at Mount Crawford by crossing the North River at Port Republic, a few miles below. He moved at 5:00 A. M. on the following morning, June 5th, by the road from Port Republic to Staunton which passes through the villages of Piedmont and New Hope, and an hour later our cavalry division, which was leading, became heavily engaged and reports were sent back to the commanding general that the guns of Ewing's Horse Battery G, First West Virginia Volunteer Light Artillery, serving with the cavalry, had not sufficient range to cope with the enemy's artillery. Upon General Hunter's referring these reports to me, I told him that the 3-inch rifled guns of the horse battery were of the same caliber as those of our mounted batteries and that there were no pieces of longer range in the whole command. He thereupon suggested that more artillery be sent forward, when I at once took the Regular and Snow's batteries to the front at a gallop and upon reaching the firing line found that a platoon of the horse battery had been sustaining an unequal contest with McClanahan's Confederate battery which had gotten its precise range and inflicted considerable damage, a single shot, among other casualties, having

killed the two wheel horses of one of the limbers. Lieutenant Shearer, the officer in charge of the platoon, apparently a youth of about twenty, was directed to extricate the dead horses from his limber even if he had to cut the harness, to take his command to the rear, make his repairs as quickly as possible and then rejoin the cavalry division. The Regular battery was then placed on the left and Snow's on the right of Shearer's former position and fire was opened about 7:00 A. M., when the hostile guns were soon withdrawn. Our main column having now arrived, Carlin and Von Kleiser reported to me, and as we advanced the Regular battery, as well as Carlin's, went into position once or twice near the left of the road but did not fire, as the enemy continued to fall back.

We were now approaching Piedmont and Sullivan's infantry division was deployed in some open fields on the northerly side of the road[1] leading from Port Republic to Staunton, with Moor's brigade on the right and Thoburn's on the left, the Eighteenth Connecticut Volunteers of the former brigade being on the extreme right of the Union line and, next to them, the Fifth New York Volunteer heavy artillery, serving as infantry, a new unit which had joined us since Newmarket. The two Federal regiments on the left of the infantry line and nearest to the Staunton road were the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts and Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania Volunteers, while the bulk of Stahel's cavalry was massed in rear of Sullivan's infantry.

[1] This road is called the "east road" in Prof. Milton W. Humphreys' account of the battle of Piedmont, as contained in his *History of the Lynchburg Campaign*.

The position of the enemy being now fully unmasked, his center and left were found to be in a thick wood stretching from the village of Piedmont [1] to the almost vertical bluffs near the junction of the Middle River and the North Fork of the Shenandoah, while his right wing, which was somewhat further back than his center and left so as to conform to the nature of the terrain, extended from the village to some high ground to the right and rear of the Confederate position.

The enemy's artillery opened about 9:00 A. M., when we were able to determine that his most advanced guns, consisting of the four pieces of Marquis' battery and Bryan's two short range pieces, were posted on the Staunton road, close to the edge of the wood, and that one of his batteries (McClanahan's) was in position a little further to the rear but more to our left and directly in front of the village, while the four long range guns of Bryan's Confederate battery were posted on the high ground just mentioned, their position being so elevated that they could deliver a plunging fire on our entire front: fortunately for us, however, their fire was lacking in accuracy and was in consequence comparatively negligible.

I placed my four batteries in the best attainable positions —Von Kleiser's New York battery not far from the left of our infantry division and on the right or northerly side of the road to Staunton [2]—Snow's battery at an interval of

[1] Piedmont was one mile from New Hope and about ten miles from Staunton, on the road leading from that town to Port Republic.

[2] In his *History of the Lynchburg Campaign*, Prof. Humphreys states, p. 38, that in the early part of the engagement only two of Von Kleiser's guns

several hundred yards from Von Kleiser's left and on the other side of the road—next my Regular battery at some distance from Snow and to his left, while Carlin was at a considerable interval from the Regular battery and still more to the left near an orchard. Taking my post in rear and right of the Regular battery, I was able, by the free use of mounted orderlies, to direct and concentrate the fire of the twenty-two pieces under my command.[1]

My first order was to disregard entirely the four pieces of Bryan's battery on the enemy's extreme right, as well as McClanahan's battery in front of the village of Piedmont and to open with our twenty-two pieces on the four guns of Marquis' battery and the two of Bryan's which were posted near the edge of the wood along the Staunton road. In a comparatively short time the concentrated fire of the Union batteries was too much for these guns, which were compelled to abandon their position and fall back rather precipitately to a point, as nearly as we could judge, farther down the road and beyond the village. The withdrawal was evidently made in great haste, as after the battle we found a number of unused projectiles on the ground occupied by the Confederate artillery just named, together with some blood-soaked clothing, indicating that casualties had been sustained.

were on the northerly side of the road, but this is an error, as the whole battery of four guns was put in position on that side of the road and remained there throughout the action, except when I took a platoon to the firing line to open on the enemy's rail defences.

[1] Humphreys states in his *History of the Lynchburg Campaign*, p. 40, that "Captain du Pont had adopted a method of using artillery" which consisted in "concentrating the fire of many guns on small units of the enemy, one at a time, until it is silenced." All professional soldiers know, however, that this is one of the fundamental precepts in regard to artillery fire as prescribed by the standard authorities.

I next concentrated the fire of my twenty-two pieces upon McClanahan's battery immediately in front of the village of Piedmont with the result that some of the houses were considerably damaged. This could not be avoided, as fragments of our percussion shells as they burst near the Confederate position, were freely disseminated among the buildings and some of our shots which were aimed too high passed over the battery and penetrated the structures in the village. To my great satisfaction, however, I afterwards learned that few, if any, casualties had occurred among the terror-stricken residents of Piedmont, who were compelled, on that eventful Sunday morning, to lie prostrate in their cellars, this being their only chance of safety.

Our fire soon began to tell upon the battery in front of Piedmont and before very long it likewise limbered up and went to the rear, leaving behind, to my personal knowledge, a shattered wheel and some artillery harness which showed that it had not gotten away unscathed.

Von Kleiser's New York battery was now ordered to cease firing as the projectiles from his Napoleon guns could not reach Bryan's four pieces on the extreme Confederate right, but my eighteen 3-inch rifled guns were concentrated upon these pieces with marked effect. After a somewhat protracted resistance, their fire entirely ceased about 11:30 A. M., eliciting the following statement in General Hunter's official report: "At 11:30 the fine practice of our artillery had silenced the enemy's batteries." [1]

Although we did not succeed in taking Bryan's battery on the Confederate right, Professor Humphreys, who par-

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 95.

ticipated in the battle as a Confederate artillerist, states that Bryan's "most powerful piece, an excellent 20-pound Parrott (a captured Federal gun) was put out of action by a shot which bent the axle, making it impossible to move the gun by hand." [1] In any event, the fire of our rifled guns must have been very galling and had most probably forced the hostile cannoneers to temporarily withdraw from the immediate vicinity of their pieces, as upon examining after the battle the position held by Bryan, I observed that the furrows made by the percussion shells as they struck the ground before exploding, which were fired from our batteries on either flank, intersected each other on the very site occupied by the Confederate guns.

About this time General Sullivan asked that some artillery be sent to the front to open on the rail defences, hastily constructed to protect the enemy's infantry line and which, from the nature of the ground, were at that point exposed to view. I accordingly took forward in person [2] a platoon (two pieces) of the New York battery and opened with solid shot on the point indicated, when the fence rails, though probably serviceable enough against an infantry attack, proved to be of no value whatever so far as artillery fire was concerned. Having satisfactorily accomplished its task, the platoon was ordered to return to its former position. Colonel William G. Ely, of the Eighteenth Connecticut Volunteers, stated in his official report that the platoon "did excellent service in knocking the rail pens to splinters

[1] *A History of the Lynchburg Campaign*, by Milton W. Humphreys, p. 43.
[2] Prof. Humphreys, in his *History of the Lynchburg Campaign*, p. 38, says that these two pieces were placed "without request or orders from anyone," but this is a mistake.

amid great slaughter," [1] which is confirmed by the following statement of Captain James F. Jones of the Confederate service: "We were subjected to a severe artillery fire from a battery of two guns, at a distance of not more than 500 yards, and which became a more severe ordeal than the fire of the enemy's (Union) infantry." [2]

Meantime Sullivan's division, which early in the day had driven back the Confederate skirmishers upon their main body, had firmly maintained its ground until shortly before 1:00 o'clock, when Sullivan was ordered to attack on our extreme right with Moor's brigade. The Federal troops, however, met with an exceedingly stubborn resistance, and after a fierce contest were compelled to fall back. This seemed to encourage the enemy who, at 2:00 P. M., with ear-splitting yells, made a most determined assault upon our whole line, which was repulsed after some hand-to-hand fighting, Von Kleiser's battery materially assisting by direct fire, while Du Pont's [3] and Snow's batteries greatly helped by a most effective enfilade fire. Carlin, however, was too far to the left to be of much use.

The Confederates having been now driven back, Hunter decided to make a general assault upon their line, which was to be launched at 3:00 o'clock precisely, and, as a preliminary, my twenty-two guns opened upon the Confederate position in the wood, no attention being paid to the fire of the enemy's long range guns on his extreme right, which

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 117.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. LI, Part I, p. 1226.
[3] Hunter, in his official report, calls Du Pont's battery "Morton's battery," a unit which did not exist in the artillery brigade.

had reopened. Throughout the whole engagement, Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery (Du Pont's battery), fired 801 rounds of ammunition.

At the appointed hour our general assault was duly carried out, when Thoburn, who some time before had been able to place the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts and the Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania Volunteers in a position in the wood from which he could enfilade the left of the Confederate infantry, now attacked vigorously with these two regiments, while the rest of Sullivan's infantry division, as well as Stahel's cavalry division, dismounted, led in person by their respective commanders, made a frontal attack. The Confederates, after a desperate resistance, finally gave way in great disorder with casualties of about 600 and losses of over a thousand prisoners including 60 officers. Although our cavalry had played a very satisfactory part in the direct assault, during which its commander had been wounded, its pursuit of the enemy was very feeble: had this been vigorously pressed, it would seem that most of the Confederate artillery and many additional prisoners would have fallen into our hands.

Among the dead was General William E. Jones, the Confederate commander, who had served for a number of years as a cavalry officer in the Regular Army but had resigned his commission in 1857, some time previous to the Civil War. Hunter states[1] that the papers found on Jones's person showed that he had "between 6,000 and 7,000 men, and 16 guns, among them two 20-pounder Parrots, and one 24-pounder howitzer," although the correct-

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 95.

ness of these figures is disputed by some of the Confederate authorities.

As soon as the battle had ended, I rode over the field and minutely examined the effect of our artillery fire which had done great execution as indicated not only by the holes and indentations made by the Union projectiles, but by the terribly mangled condition of a great number of the Confederate dead, whose bodies were strewn along the positions occupied by the hostile line of battle. The heavy Confederate casualties due to the Federal artillery fire are confirmed by Humphreys whose account of the battle states that prior to the final Union assault "the Confederate infantry was much reduced in numbers by the destructive fire of Du Pont's guns," and that "the reader will be struck with the fact that the sad 'day's work,' according to Imboden himself, did not result from the *position,* which, though not selected, happened to be an excellent one, but for the unforeseen and almost unparalleled efficiency of Du Pont's artillery." [1]

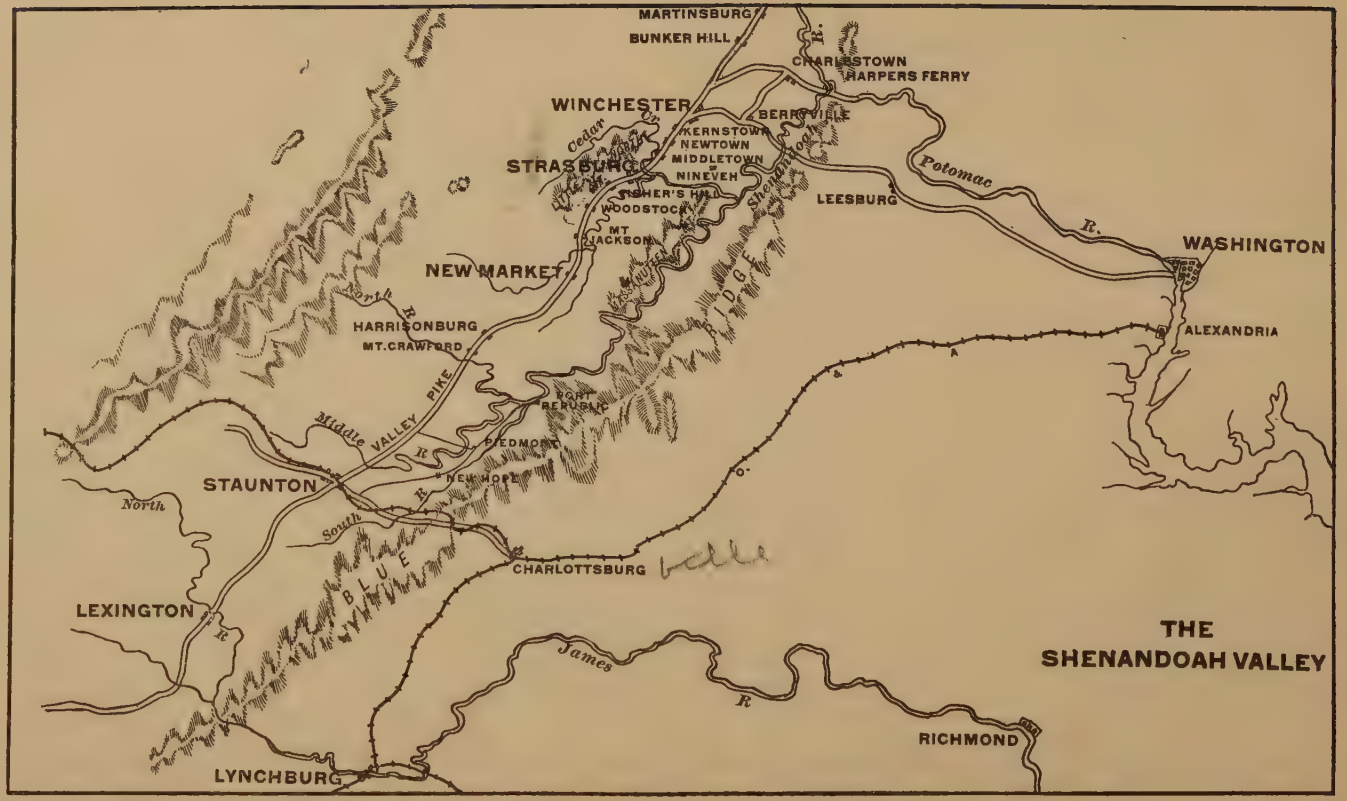
Although I did not learn of his death until long afterwards, among the killed on the Confederate side was Major Richard Brewer, of Annapolis, Maryland, with whom I had been at West Point for several years. Hearing, however, that Colonel William H. Browne, of the Forty-fifth Virginia infantry, who also had been with me at the Military Academy and whom I knew personally very well, was wounded and a prisoner, I went to see him. He had received medical attention and been made as comfortable as possible on the ground and did not seem to me to be very

[1] *A History of the Lynchburg Campaign,* by Milton W. Humphreys, p. 51.

seriously injured. Having acted as brigade commander on the extreme left of the Confederate line, Browne talked almost exclusively about the tactical dispositions of the opposing forces, insisting that the Union infantry had not been well handled, as it should have attempted earlier to turn the left flank of the Confederates, which was their vulnerable point. Not having been on that part of the field, however, I was unfamiliar with the ground and could say but little. As we both looked forward to his long captivity as a wounded prisoner, I inquired whether he had any funds, his reply being, "Not one cent," upon which I gave him all the money I then had in the world, consisting of a $10 bill. As our column was just beginning the march to Staunton early on the following morning, I heard, to my surprise and very great regret, that Browne had died of his wounds during the night.

CHAPTER V

FROM PIEDMONT TO LYNCHBURG


MARTINSBURG
BUNKER HILL
CHARLESTOWN
HARPERS FERRY
WINCHESTER
BERRYVILLE
KERNSTOWN
NEWTOWN
MIDDLETOWN
NINEVEH
STRASBURG
FISHER'S HILL
WOODSTOCK
MT JACKSON
NEW MARKET
LEESBURG
Potomac R.
WASHINGTON
ALEXANDRIA
HARRISONBURG
MT. CRAWFORD
Middle VALLEY PIKE
PORT REPUBLIC
PIEDMONT
NEW HOPE
STAUNTON
North R.
South R.
CHARLOTTSBURG
LEXINGTON
BLUE RIDGE
James R.
RICHMOND
LYNCHBURG
THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

CHAPTER V

FROM PIEDMONT TO LYNCHBURG

AS a sequence to our victory at Piedmont on the 5th of June, we occupied Staunton without opposition on the following morning and remained there awaiting the arrival of the divisions of Crook and Averell which joined us on the 8th after successfully repelling the enemy who tried to impede their advance, and destroying the Virginia Central Railroad to the west of that town. The next day (June 9th) was devoted to the issue of ammunition, clothing and shoes to Crook's and Averell's men, which they greatly needed. As the Confederate authorities had foreseen that the junction of Crook and Averell with Hunter could not be prevented, Breckinridge's command was sent back from Lee's army to Rockfish Gap (the pass through the Blue Ridge mountains nearest to Staunton) and arrived on the very day that the Union forces had actually effected a junction. When it was seen, however, that Hunter was moving by way of Lexington and the Peaks of Otter, Breckinridge marched with his infantry and artillery towards Lynchburg where he arrived on the 16th at noon. General Hunter established his headquarters at the principal hotel in Staunton, situated on an elevation overlooking the town and the unsurpassed scenery of the adjacent country, and while there made his official report of

the operations of his command to the 8th of June, inclusive, to which we shall refer later.

We left Staunton early on the 10th, and upon reaching Lexington before noon on the 11th, were met by a straggling infantry fire from the cadet barracks of the Virginia Military Institute and from other points along the North River, a tributary of the James, together with one or two cannon shots. Upon the receipt of orders to return the fire, the Regular battery at once opened with its six pieces on the stone barracks of the cadets, but after one round an order came to cease firing, the defenders of the place having retreated as our cavalry crossed the North River below.[1]

We remained at Lexington for two days and a half, during which time every building connected with the Institute was burned to the ground by General Hunter's order, save the quarters of the superintendent, Colonel F. H. Smith, which were spared on account of the illness of a member of the Smith family. With several other officers, I took part in saving some of the personal effects of Mrs. Gilham, wife of one of the professors of the Institute, by carrying out of her house with our own hands tables, sofas and other articles of furniture just before the building was set on fire. Mrs. Gilham, whose brother was an officer of the United States Regular Army, was in great distress and we were only too glad to assist her in every way in our power. Among those who helped I can only recall Captain William McKinley, afterwards President of the United States, and

[1] Some of the projectiles fired by the Regular battery are still imbedded in the granite walls of the cadet barracks.

that popular and very good soldier, Captain Richard G. Prendergast of the First New York (Lincoln) Cavalry, an Irish gentleman, who fell at Nineveh, Virginia, during the following November while leading his troop in a charge.

In my judgment, as well as in that of every other Union officer who expressed himself on the subject, the destruction of the cadet barracks was fully justified by the laws of war, but the burning of the buildings containing the library, the philosophical apparatus, the large and extensive mineralogical collection and other objects used solely for educational purposes, was entirely unnecessary, besides being contrary to the conventions of civilized warfare which respect as far as possible the property of institutions of learning.

In addition to the destruction of the Institute buildings, Hunter had the torch applied to the home of ex-Governor Letcher who was a resident of the town, not on account of any resistance offered by its occupants, but because Letcher had issued a proclamation calling upon every Virginian to resist the invaders whom he denounced in most violent and fiery adjectives.

The sole order I individually received in connection with our occupation of Lexington referred to the destruction of the artillery trophies belonging to the Institute. Taking with me the quartermaster-sergeant of the Regular battery, I examined these trophies and found that besides some cannon balls and other minor articles, the most important objects consisted of two ancient French bronze pieces, relics of the Colonial era. They were mounted on very old and greatly decayed wooden carriages, not of the Colonial

period, however, but probably dating from the war of 1812. The carriages were destroyed and the guns left on the ground as utterly worthless for any military purpose.[1]

In a highly important letter of June 6th from Grant to Hunter, which was no doubt intercepted as it never reached its destination, the latter was given the option of either attacking Lynchburg or of marching eastward towards Charlottesville and Gordonsville to effect a junction with the Union forces near those points. As Lynchburg was one of Lee's most important bases, its capture would have been a notable feat; and, although Hunter had no specific instructions, he determined to attack it. It is evident, however, that this was not a correct strategic decision, inasmuch as the defenders of Lynchburg could always outnumber any force Hunter could bring to bear against them, Lee being able at all times to reenforce that city by rail much more quickly than Hunter's troops could possibly march across country.

We set out for Lynchburg on the 14th and, after passing through Buchanan, crossed the intervening mountain range at the Peaks of Otter, where one of the most superb views on the whole American continent lay before us. My artillery brigade now consisted of the units heretofore mentioned, with the addition of two batteries which had belonged to Crook's division—McMullen's First Independent Ohio battery and Glassie's First Independent Kentucky battery, each equipped with six 3-inch rifled guns.

Although the line of march was somewhat hindered by

[1] These guns were afterwards loaded in wagons and carried off, no doubt by General Hunter's direction, although I was not informed in regard to this.

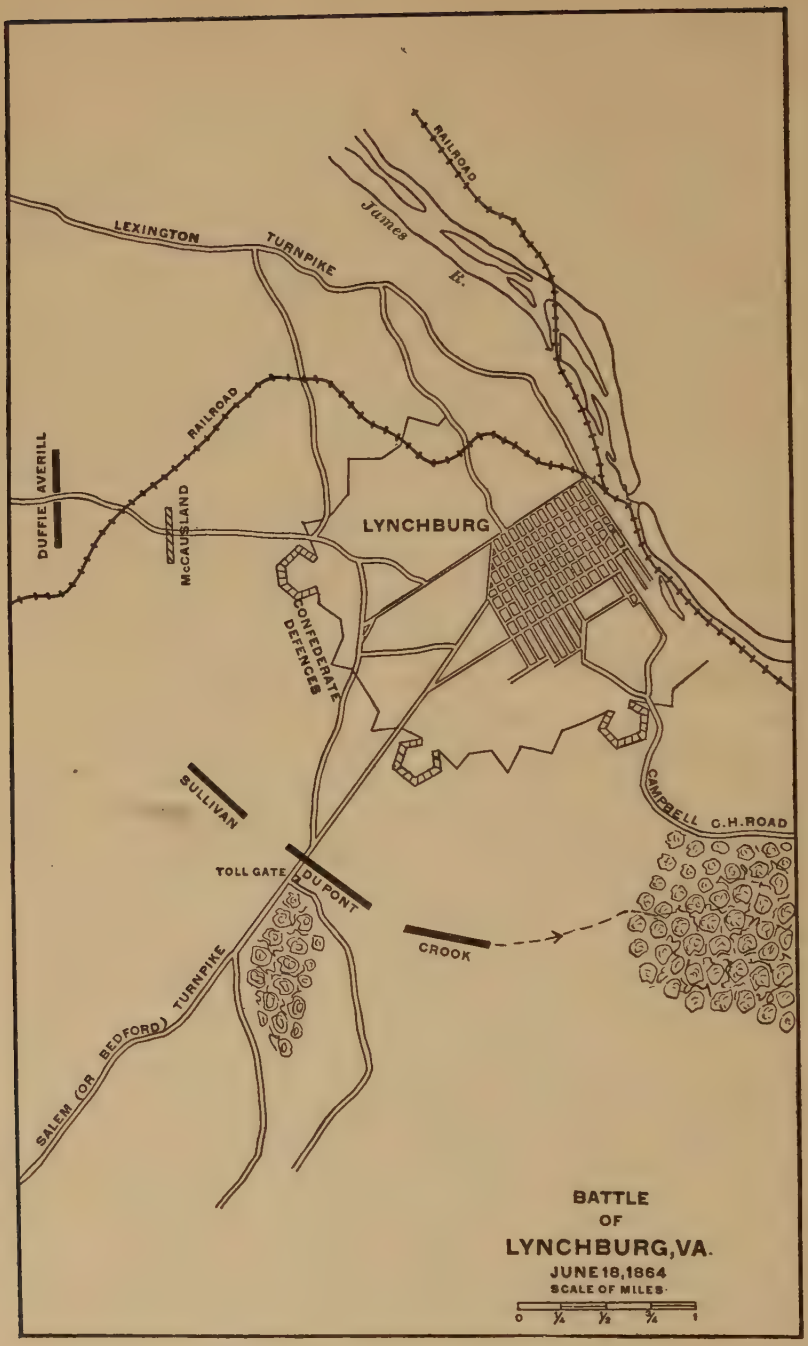
trees which had been felled across the road, we occupied Liberty (now Bedford City) on the 15th without serious delay, being joined there by a detachment of 200 mounted men under Captain Duncan of the Fourteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry, who had been sent by Averell to make a circuit in rear of the enemy's position. Duncan, after cutting the Central Railroad at Amherst Court House, had destroyed a portion of the South Side railroad at Concordia Station, and burned two railway trains.

Continuing the march on the following day, June 16th, the right platoon of Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery, under First-Sergeant Jeremiah Weaver, which had been detailed for duty with the advance guard, was warmly engaged with the enemy at Great Otter Creek.

About 4:00 P. M. on the 17th, we attacked the Confederates, five miles from Lynchburg, and forced them back upon their entrenchments in front of the town.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OF LYNCHBURG


RAILROAD
James R.
LEXINGTON TURNPIKE
RAILROAD
DUFFIE
AVERILL
McCAUSLAND
LYNCHBURG
CONFEDERATE DEFENCES
SULLIVAN
CAMPBELL C.H. ROAD
TOLL GATE
DU PONT
CROOK
SALEM (OR BEDFORD) TURNPIKE
BATTLE
OF
LYNCHBURG, VA.
JUNE 18, 1864
SCALE OF MILES
0 ¼ ½ ¾ 1

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OF LYNCHBURG

AFTER the enemy had been driven into his works late on the preceding day, our soldiers rested on their arms until the next morning, June 18th, and during the night they plainly heard the rumbling of trains which incessantly pulled into the railroad station, together with the beating of drums and the cheering of troops, indicating that the enemy was being reenforced by rail. Professor Humphreys tells us,[1] however, that General Early had arrived in person about 1:00 P. M. on the 17th with Ramseur's division and a part of Gordon's, and that an empty train is said to have been repeatedly run to and from the station during the night of the 17th-18th for the purpose of deceiving Hunter—the ruse being quite unnecessary as the Union Commander was still wholly skeptical as to the arrival of any Confederate reenforcements, which is evidenced by the statement in his official report that he had "no positive information to that effect." [2] "To settle the question," however, as he put it in his report, upon the resumption of hostilities at sunrise on the morning of the 18th, he ordered our skirmish line to be pushed beyond the toll gate on the Salem (or Bedford) turnpike,

[1] *A History of the Lynchburg Campaign,* by Milton W. Humphreys, pp. 62 and 72.
[2] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 99.

from which point a clear view could be obtained of the defences of the town. As stated in Hunter's official report, these "consisted of strong redoubts on each of the main roads entering the town about three miles apart, flanked on either side by rifle pits protected by abatis. On these lines the enemy could be seen working diligently as if to extend and strengthen them." [1]

Our skirmishers opened a brisk fire on the Confederate position and General Hunter proceeded to make his dispositions for attack by placing Crook's infantry division on the right or southeasterly side of the turnpike and Sullivan's on the left, with the artillery brigade in the center of the line, and by ordering the cavalry divisions of Averell and Duffié to attack immediately still further to our left on the Forest road, two cavalry squadrons from Averell's command being detached to cover our extreme right flank.

While these preliminary dispositions were being made, General Hunter and his staff, together with one or two division commanders and their staffs, formed a group of some thirty or forty horsemen on the turnpike beyond the toll gate, when the enemy suddenly opened with artillery. He had been able to get the exact range and many casualties would have unquestionably occurred had not his pieces been aimed a little too high: as it was, the projectiles whistled just over our heads, and it goes without saying that we promptly moved into the woods which bordered the turnpike on either side. The marksmanship of this Confederate battery was so far superior to anything we had encountered for some time past that I said to General

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 99.

Hunter, near whom I was riding, "General, this is the work of some new artillery. The people with whom we have been dealing could never have made such good practice." He replied that "this was nonsense and that the only hostile guns at Lynchburg were those whom we had met at Piedmont and previously throughout the campaign." Having volunteered the opinion as above expressed, I said nothing more, although my statement was correct, as I learn from Professor Humphreys, who was with the Confederate forces, that the artillery unit in question was Chapman's battery of McLaughlin's battalion which, although it had taken part in the battle of Newmarket, had since then been serving in Lee's army until sent back to the Valley after the battle of Piedmont, arriving at Rockfish Gap on the 8th of June with Breckinridge's former command.

The ground opposite our center was entirely open and largely so towards our left, but to the right it was thickly wooded, while directly in front of us was a splendid natural position for artillery in the shape of a gently inclined and unobstructed slope extending all the way down to the enemy's works. With such a position I had no hesitation in telling General Hunter that the artillery could repel a frontal assault upon our center, which it afterwards did. My command consisted of thirty-two guns (one platoon of Snow's battery having been detached with Averell's division) and I put them in line on the ground just described, with very close intervals between the six batteries.

Hunter first attempted to turn the enemy's left and to

this end ordered Crook to move through the woods on our right. The latter asked me for a battery and I sent Carlin's, thus reducing the number of my guns to twenty-six. Some fifteen or twenty minutes after Crook's division had disappeared in the timber, the Confederates, with Early in command, fully aware of their superior numbers and absolutely confident of their ability to destroy the Union army, attacked us with great violence. Leaping over their defences, the enemy's infantry, with terrific yells, assaulted the Union left and center, held respectively by Sullivan's division and the artillery brigade, my twenty-six remaining pieces opening with a roar. The fire of our guns was not only able to repel the attack upon our own front, but to very greatly help Sullivan by enfilading the enemy's troops who were assailing his position. So serious and prolonged, however, was the Confederate attack, that Hunter became apprehensive and ordered Crook to return at once: this he did with great promptitude, as he had his division well in hand and his troops had not penetrated very deeply into the wood.

Meantime Sullivan was able to hold the enemy in check [1] until Crook appeared, when the two divisions made a joint attack upon the Confederates and drove them back to their defences, taking a number of prisoners.

Carlin having rejoined me upon Crook's return, my command again consisted of thirty-two pieces and the effect of our fire prompted the following statement in General Hunter's official report: "The artillery, which materially assisted in repelling the attack, was served with remarkable

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 100.

rapidity and efficiency." [1] Had the Confederates waited until Crook's turning movement was further developed, they might have been able to crush Sullivan before Crook could have come to his assistance; but by attacking prematurely they threw away their chances of winning the battle.

The weather was excessively hot, and after the repulse of the enemy I rode over to headquarters to make my report. Upon arriving there I felt peculiarly and the chief surgeon of the Department staff took me off my horse and told me I was suffering from a slight sunstroke. My head was deluged with water and a liquid given me to swallow, after which I was placed on the ground with my back against a tree and in a few moments was fast asleep, only to be awakened a little later by a renewal of the cannonading when the enemy made a second assault. Forgetting my trouble, I at once started up, sprang upon my horse and galloped back to my own command. Unfortunately the cure was only temporary and, although my sunstroke was unperceived for the moment, I felt its effects for many months afterwards.

The afternoon was spent in examining the prisoners taken when we repulsed the enemy's attack, General Hunter and the Union staff, in which I was included, being present. The prisoners all told the same story and stated that they belonged to various regiments, brigades and divisions of Early's corps, had left Lee's army June 13th, and had arrived by rail at Lynchburg on the day before the battle. It being now fully and absolutely established that the infantry of Early's veteran corps from Lee's army had

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 100.

reached Lynchburg, General Hunter was compelled, much against his will, to revise the opinion which, up to that time, he had so long and persistently held that Lee could not or would not reenforce the defenders of Lynchburg.

CHAPTER VII

FROM LYNCHBURG ACROSS THE ALLEGHANIES TO PARKERSBURG AND THENCE TO HARPERS FERRY

CHAPTER VII

FROM LYNCHBURG ACROSS THE ALLEGHANIES TO PARKERSBURG AND THENCE TO HARPERS FERRY

WITH but little ammunition and less food, we now found ourselves in a hostile country several hundred miles from our base, from which we were entirely cut off, and confronted by a force of Confederate veteran troops under Early much greater than our own. Everyone recognized the extreme peril of the situation and it was quite evident that in the event of our supplies of food or ammunition becoming exhausted, the larger part of our command could not hope to escape capture and that we would lose our trains and artillery.

It was decided to fall back on West Virginia by way of Liberty, Buford's Gap and Salem. Hunter ordered the withdrawal to begin at dark and the sentries to remain until midnight when they were also to retire. We marched all night and at 4:30 A. M. on the 19th arrived at the site of our last camp.

As it was perfectly clear to me that our only safety lay in an exceedingly prompt and rapid retreat, my first inquiry, upon awakening after an hour's sleep, was whether any orders to move had been received. None having come, I

went at once to General Hunter's headquarters and found him making his morning ablutions outside of his tent. As a member of the Department staff, a conference with the commanding general was always in order, and in view of the responsibilities incident to my position as chief of artillery, it seemed to be my obvious duty to do everything possible to expedite the retreat, this being the only means by which we could hope to save our guns.

General Hunter seemed a little dazed, probably due to the fact that it had been positively established that the Confederate troops at Lynchburg had been reenforced by the infantry of Early's whole corps and that the enemy's forces largely outnumbered our own—a situation for which our commander-in-chief was totally unprepared. Upon stating to him that no orders for our movement had been received, he remarked, "I think we ought to get away by nine o'clock or thereabouts."

Under the excessive tension of the moment, it was hard to accept this statement with equanimity, indicating as it did his failure to grasp the almost desperate situation of our command, and I intuitively felt that the time had come for plain speaking. Addressing him with all due military respect, but in very distinct tones, I at once said: "General, the enemy's skirmish line will be here at the very latest at a quarter past eight and it is necessary to realize that our men, knowing that they have but little ammunition and less food won't stand five minutes, so greatly are they demoralized by hunger and exhaustion. Our sole chance of safety lies in moving instantly." Beginning at last to take in the gravity of the situation, he then said, "Well,

we shall have to get off soon after seven"—which we did, and marched all day towards Buford's Gap, the pursuing foe, with the utmost confidence and exultation, sharply attacking our rear guard at Liberty late in the afternoon.

By sunset the whole Union command had passed into Buford's Gap, when I got some food and a little more sleep; but as I could not understand why no orders had been received for the resumption of the march, I again went in search of General Hunter. This was a task of some difficulty, as his staff seemed to have melted away and even his faithful nephew and aide, Lieutenant Stockton, was not in evidence; but I at last ascertained that the General, feeling unwell, was reposing in a small cottage along the Salem turnpike. Upon entering this cottage and finding him entirely alone, stretched on the couch of the little sitting room, I lost no time in telling him that it was imperative that immediate orders should be issued for the continuance of the march, as otherwise we could not hope to escape a great disaster. (drunk)

Though still apparently somewhat dazed, he finally said, "Captain du Pont, I am not feeling at all well and the adjutant-general, Colonel Halpine, is ill in an ambulance. As I am unable to lay my hands on any other member of my staff, I wish you would issue in my name all the necessary orders for continuing the movement." I said, "Very well, General, I will attend to it."

It was then 7:30 P. M. and I at once rode to General Crook's headquarters and was very much gratified to find that my conviction as to the imperative necessity of an immediate and very rapid retreat was fully and entirely

in accord with his judgment. I asked him how soon his division could move, suggesting midnight. He said, "That is too soon; the men are so fatigued that I do not see how they can possibly get off before 1:00 A. M.," and he also informed me that it was the turn of his division to lead the infantry column on the next day's march. Asking for pencil and paper I wrote an order directing the Second infantry division (Crook's) to move promptly at 1:00 A. M., June 20th, on the Salem road, signing the document "By command of Major-General Hunter" as "Captain and Chief of Artillery," this being a novel channel for the transmission of marching orders!

Leaving Crook, I went to Sullivan's headquarters and gave him the order to move at 1:10 A. M. following Crook's command. Appropriate instructions were then issued to the various units of the artillery brigade directing them to move in turn immediately in rear of the infantry column. The next step was to find the two cavalry divisions, and upon reaching their respective headquarters after considerable search, I gave them orders in General Hunter's name setting forth the line of march and instructing them to follow the artillery brigade. Finally, at 11:30 P. M., four hours after I had begun my mission, I was able to return to General Hunter and report that all the orders had been issued for the command to move at 1:00 A. M., upon which he said, "Very well," and returned to his couch.

While the landscape was brilliantly illuminated by the clearest and most beautiful moonlight, the grass everywhere was reeking with heavy dew, and as it was almost impossible

to find any other dry place upon which to lie, I stretched myself on the narrow pebble path which extended from the road to the porch of the cottage in which the General was reposing and there slept profoundly for thirty minutes until Crook's division began its movement.

Most fortunately for the Union cause, at this highly critical moment the Confederates lost their opportunity of overtaking us, as there was some mistake in the transmission of the Confederate orders, which delayed Early's pursuit until soon after sunrise and gave us a lead of several hours which enabled us to outstrip the enemy.

General Hunter's rest in the cottage seemed to have quite restored his pristine vigor and to have made him at last fully appreciate the gravity of the situation. Upon resuming our march towards evening he became very much exasperated, this time not without a great deal of justification, by the refractory conduct of a stupid teamster who persisted in placing his wagon in a position which absolutely blocked the movement of our column. Snatching the whip from the hand of the astounded wagoner, our commanding general soundly castigated the offender with the instrument with which the latter was wont to belabor his own beasts!

Our line of march took us through Big Lick (now Roanoke) and Salem, where we arrived very early on the morning of the 21st and began the ascent of the Catawba range of the Alleghanies. Near the latter place my artillery brigade was attacked by the enemy who unfortunately were able to do a great deal of damage. Duffié, whose cavalry division immediately preceded the column of batteries, had

strict orders to strongly picket all intersecting roads. In one instance, however, these instructions were not carried out, when a detachment of the enemy's cavalry, quick to take advantage of the neglect, attacked the artillery column about 9:00 A. M., taking possession of Snow's and Carlin's batteries, disabling the carriages and carrying off the horses. Though soon driven off with a loss of some thirty men by Schoonmaker's brigade of Averell's division which followed the artillery column, to my bitter regret, it became necessary by reason of the loss of the horses to abandon eight pieces, but the guns were spiked and the carriages destroyed together with their limbers and caissons.

During the night of the 23rd, the Union command arrived at the old Sweet Springs, where our weary soldiers were able to take a few hours of greatly needed repose. This was particularly grateful to me personally, as I was almost exhausted, having had only four and one-half hours of sleep during the preceding four days and three nights, not counting the fitful slumber obtained by nodding in my saddle as I bestrode my horse. Again pushing forward, we arrived on the evening of Friday the 24th of June at the White Sulphur Springs, a place of exceptional natural beauty, which previous to the Civil War had been one of the chief summer resorts of the Southern people. We halted there for twenty-four hours, this being a very great boon to our over-fatigued troops, as since leaving Lexington on the 14th, they had been either marching or fighting without intermission for ten consecutive days.

On the following morning, June 25th, it was freely noised about that when we moved on the morrow, General

Hunter had ordered the burning of the immense hotel of Colonial architecture as well as of the long rows of cottages and numerous other buildings which clustered about it. As we were no longer followed by the enemy, who had abandoned his pursuit for more than forty-eight hours, and as no hostile movement or armed resistance of any kind had been made when we took possession of the "White Sulphur," I was greatly surprised when I heard of the contemplated destruction of such a very large amount of private property. It seemed to me that the burning of the buildings would be a clear violation not only of the rules of civilized warfare but of the specific instructions of the United States Government. With these thoughts in mind and with a thorough knowledge of the characteristics of the man I was about to meet, I reported to General Hunter about noon and made inquiry as to the hour for beginning the march on the following day and in regard to other details. Due attention having been given to these matters, I remarked, as I was about to depart, "General, I hear that you intend to burn the buildings here when we leave." He replied, "Yes, I intend to burn them all down." After a short pause, I said, "Don't you think, General, that the burning of these structures would be a military mistake?" This seemed to arouse him, and, raising his voice a little, he at once asked, "What do you mean, Captain, by that inquiry?" Looking him squarely in the eyes, my response was as follows: "I mean this, General—if we have later to occupy and hold this country, the White Sulphur Springs will be the natural point for our principal station, as so many roads converge here. Such being the

case, the buildings as they stand would furnish excellent winter quarters for at least a brigade of troops." He said nothing but looked at me with some suspicion, as I thought. In a few seconds, however, his expression changed and he quietly remarked, "Well, I had not thought of that," whereupon he instantly called his orderly and sent for the adjutant-general to report forthwith. Upon the arrival of this officer, Hunter said at once, "Colonel, I have changed my mind about burning the buildings here. Don't issue the order." Without another word I lost no time in taking my departure and returned to my own camp with the satisfaction of knowing that I had been the means of averting a wrong and unjustifiable act.

Early's pursuit having been discontinued since the 22nd, we had thenceforth only to face the lack of food and the fatigue incident to a four days' very difficult march over the Alleghanies in order to reach our supplies. Leaving White Sulphur Springs on the evening of the 25th, with the buildings intact, we continued our retreat over the mountains by way of Lewisburg, Meadow Bluff and Hawk's Nest to Gauley Bridge which was reached on the 29th.

The Union forces were in desperate straits for food, but so far as the Regular battery was concerned, which I still continued to command notwithstanding my position as chief of artillery, I had impounded some of the rations issued in advance to last for a number of days, and had sufficient stock on hand to be able to give every man daily one of the army biscuits known to the soldiers as "hardtacks"; and upon this, together with a certain amount of the almost uneatable fresh beef furnished by the gaunt and

half-famished cattle which were driven before the army, each soldier had to subsist.

The volunteer infantry behaved extremely well; although they were in very sore plight, there was no grumbling or complaining, but as they dragged their weary steps along the road, they slashed the young trees and saplings with their knives and chewed the inner bark to relieve the pangs of hunger. As our movement progressed, the diminutive corncribs of the mountaineers, only capable of holding a few small cartloads of that cereal, were eagerly ransacked by the cavalry which was leading and the scanty stock which remained, often consisting of but a few ears of corn, was given to their famished horses. The animals, as they greedily munched the food, scattered some of the grains on the highway, and when the infantry column came up the sad spectacle was presented of numerous soldiers eagerly disputing for single grains of corn lying in the dust of the road and quickly transferring them to their mouths!

Great as were the privations of the men, the suffering of the poor animals was infinitely more acute, the sides of the road being strewn with dead and dying cavalry horses as the column moved on. Most of the artillery horses, however, were saved by compelling the cannoneers to pull green leaves and twigs from the trees along the road and feed them to the famished beasts.[1]

Upon arriving at Gauley Bridge, an abundant supply of food and forage awaited our starving command. Light Battery B, Fifth Artillery, was encamped at Mrs. Hale's

[1] My Regular battery lost but a single animal.

farm near Charleston, West Virginia, from the 29th of June until the 2nd of July. Our strength and spirits quickly revived and we were all ready to resume the march when the order came for the artillery to move by land to Parkersburg, West Virginia, while the infantry was to ascend the Ohio River by steamboat. It was hay-making time as we passed through that country, and the women and children everywhere were raking or loading the hay under the superintendence of a few very old men, nearly all of the able-bodied male inhabitants, the great majority of whom were loyal to the Union, having gone to the war.

On the first evening of the movement from Charleston of the remaining batteries of the artillery brigade, I had just fallen asleep after a hard day's march when I was awakened by an order brought by a special messenger from Department headquarters directing me to turn over my command to the next senior officer and proceed with the utmost despatch to Parkersburg, reporting in person, upon my arrival, to the major-general commanding. While the order was not an agreeable one, it had to be obeyed. Fortunately an almost full moon illuminated the surroundings and, mounting my horse, I rode all night accompanied by the Department messenger and my faithful orderly, Bugler Wende, reaching Parkersburg early on the following morning, when it appeared that I had been called upon to make my long ride for the purpose of inspecting a number of horses which the quartermaster was about to purchase for the artillery! During the days which followed, the batteries of my artillery brigade were entrained for Martinsburg, and upon reaching their destination, marched to Harpers

Ferry to assist in repelling Early's operations on both sides of the Potomac.

Reenforcements from the Army of the Potomac had now arrived and the early part of July found us near Halltown, in the immediate vicinity of Harpers Ferry, General A. P. Howe, United States Volunteers, being assigned to the command of all the artillery at that point, no notification of which, however, was sent to me by our Department headquarters. Howe treated my batteries as independent units of his immediate command, wholly ignoring the existence of the artillery brigade created, as heretofore stated, on the 23rd day of the preceding May by special order No. 103 of the Department of West Virginia, within the limits of which we were still operating. As this virtually abrogated the order just named, it was a question which concerned General Hunter as much as it did me; and when the situation was explained to him, he sent a very curt message to the effect that "Captain Du Pont must take the consequences if he fails to obey General Howe's orders." As I had not the slightest intention or disposition to dispute the orders in question, Hunter's message was without significance so far as I was personally concerned, but upon thinking the matter over, it occurred to me that the anomalous conditions then existing would disappear if I were relieved from duty as chief of artillery of the Department of West Virginia and ordered to resume the command of my own battery. Accordingly, on the 28th of July I repaired to headquarters and presented to the adjutant-general a written application to that effect which made no comments whatsoever in regard to the situation, where-

upon General Hunter directed that my request be granted and the necessary order issued, but did not express any desire to see me personally.

Having now been relieved from duty as chief of artillery of the Department of West Virginia, I was on my way to resume my regular command when I met General Crook, who accosted me as follows: "You are the very man I am looking for." He then informed me that an order had been just issued from Sheridan's headquarters designating the troops of the Department of West Virginia, actually in the field, as "The Army of West Virginia" and appointing him to its command. He concluded by saying that he wanted me to be his chief of artillery, and I was very glad to accept this offer as Crook was a professional soldier of long experience and exceptional military ability who had always inspired me with the utmost confidence and respect. Under the new title of Chief of Artillery of the Army of West Virginia, I was thus reinstated in the position which I had vacated about an hour before, the units of my personal command being the same except that Munk's Light Battery D, First Pennsylvania Volunteer Artillery (six 10-pounder Parrotts) and Gibb's Light Battery L, First Ohio Volunteer Artillery (four Napoleon guns), had replaced Snow's and Carlin's batteries which had fared so badly when the enemy attacked us near Salem.

A few days later, August 8th, General Hunter, at his own request, was relieved from the command of the Department of West Virginia, a step which definitely terminated my military service under his orders.

Our former commanding general's campaign in the

Valley of Virginia, as well as his attempt to capture Lynchburg, were unquestionably of great value to the Union cause, and the results attained were thus tersely summed up by General Grant himself: "Hunter had acted with great promptness and great success . . . had penetrated into the enemy's country towards their main army" and "inflicted a much greater damage upon them than they have inflicted upon us with double his force." [1]

As before stated, General Hunter submitted, while at Staunton, an official report of his operations up to June 8th inclusive, and exactly two months later, August 8th, he made a second report from Harpers Ferry, which completed the account of his operations in the field. In neither of these documents, however, is to be found the slightest personal commendation of any officer under his command—not even of Crook, nor of Sullivan and Stahel, nor of any brigade commander, nor of the chief of artillery, nor of a number of other officers whose individual efforts had largely contributed to bring about the results obtained.

So far as Stahel and Sullivan were concerned, we have seen that on the 22nd of May Hunter reported to the Adjutant-General that they were both lacking in experience and that he telegraphed on the same day to General Halleck, Chief of Staff, that "it would be impossible to exaggerate the inefficiency" of the first named. Later, June 9th, after the battle of Piedmont, Hunter's prejudice against Stahel seems to have abated, at least temporarily, inasmuch as he wrote to Halleck that Stahel, having been wounded "while

[1] Letter from Grant to Acting-Secretary of War, July 15, 1864, in General Hunter's report of his military services made to the War Department, 1873, pp. 51-2.

gallantly leading his division in the recent battle of Piedmont," he had been relieved "from service with forces in the field," adding that "it is but justice to Major-General Stahel to state that in the recent engagement he displayed excellent qualities of coolness and gallantry and that for the final happy result the country is much indebted to his services." [1] Notwithstanding this complimentary letter, no individual mention of Stahel or Sullivan can be found in either of Hunter's official reports, although at the battle of Piedmont the attack of their divisions, which they respectively led in person, decided the issue of the contest, Stahel being wounded.

In view of what has just been said, it is hard to determine Hunter's real feelings in regard to the above named general officers, which are possibly revealed by his letter to General Grant of December 6, 1864, written after the campaign was entirely concluded and there had been ample time to consider all of its features. In this letter, Hunter made the following statement: "When I relieved General Sigel I found his command very much disorganized and demoralized from his recent defeat at Newmarket, and the three generals with it, Sigel, Stahel and Sullivan, *not worth one cent; in fact, very much in my way.*" [2] As Hunter had full authority to relieve Stahel and Sullivan from their respective commands and assign them to other duty, if the opinion just quoted represented his deliberate judgment and was not a mere outburst of sudden petulance, it would seem that by retaining both of them, as he did, in command

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XXXVII, Part I, p. 612.
[2] *Ibid.*, Part II, p. 366. (The *italics* are the author's.)

of their respective divisions, he was exposing the public service to very great unnecessary risk. In justice, however, to Stahel and Sullivan, it should be said that they not only behaved with the utmost gallantry at Piedmont, but that they served most creditably throughout all the dangers and privations of Hunter's campaigns.

So far as the Regular officers were concerned, in but two instances were their services recognized by brevet promotions in the Regular Army, although they had taken their full part in the extraordinary fatigues and perils of Hunter's Valley campaign and of his expedition to Lynchburg. These two promotions consisted of a brevet of Brigadier-General in the Regular Army awarded to General Hunter himself, March 13, 1865, "for gallant and meritorious service in the battle of Piedmont and during the campaign in the valley of Virginia;" and of a brevet as Captain in the Regular Army, dated June 18, 1864 (the date of the battle of Lynchburg), conferred upon his nephew, Lieutenant Samuel W. Stockton of the First Regular cavalry, "for gallant and meritorious service during the expedition of General Hunter against Lynchburg, Virginia."

CHAPTER VIII

ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY OF THE SHENANDOAH AND ENGAGEMENT AT BERRYVILLE

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ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY OF THE SHENANDOAH AND ENGAGEMENT AT BERRYVILLE

EARLY'S campaign along the Potomac during the summer of 1864 had become a matter of very serious concern to the Federal authorities in Washington, involving as it did, besides a number of minor affairs, the burning of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania,[1] the cutting of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, the defeat of General Wallace at Monocacy Junction near Frederick, Maryland, and finally the attack on the National Capital.

To meet this situation, a force sufficient to cope with Early, styled the Army of the Shenandoah, was assembled as rapidly as possible at Harpers Ferry. It consisted of the Sixth and Nineteenth Army corps under the respective commands of Generals Wright and Emory; of the two infantry divisions and a portion of the artillery which had taken part in Hunter's Lynchburg campaign under the command of Major-General Crook (officially known by the somewhat pretentious title of the Army of West Virginia but commonly called Crook's corps); and of Merritt's and J. H. Wilson's cavalry divisions from the Army of the

[1] The Confederates claimed that Chambersburg was burned in retaliation for the extensive destruction by fire of private property in the Valley of Virginia pursuant to General Hunter's orders.

Potomac, which, with a third cavalry division under Averell organized from the troops of that arm which had participated in the Lynchburg expedition, constituted a cavalry corps of three divisions commanded by Brigadier-General Alfred T. A. Torbert, United States Volunteers, an officer of the Regular Army.[1]

The Sixth corps, which belonged to the Army of the Potomac and had taken an active part in its many campaigns, was remarkably well led, all of the division and several of the brigade commanders being highly competent soldiers of long experience. The Nineteenth corps, on the other hand, which had recently arrived from Louisiana, although largely exceeding the Sixth corps in numbers, was far behind it in discipline and efficiency. The troops of Crook's corps had seen a great deal of field service and the division commanders, Colonels Thoburn and Duval, were most capable and energetic officers. The cavalry corps, like the Sixth corps, was exceedingly well led, the majority of its division commanders being professional soldiers.

Major-General Philip H. Sheridan, United States Volunteers, who was assigned to the command of the newly organized Army of the Shenandoah, had been previously in charge of the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac, a highly important post which had come to him in recognition of good service as a division commander in the West.

Upon assuming command of the Army of the Shenandoah on the 8th of August, Sheridan acted with caution, and although several minor attacks were made by the

[1] Torbert was a native of Delaware who graduated from the Military Academy in 1855 and died in 1880.

enemy at Halltown near Harpers Ferry, he did not allow his troops to be bottled up in that vicinity but very wisely placed them farther out in the open country between Berryville and Clifton, Virginia, to await developments.

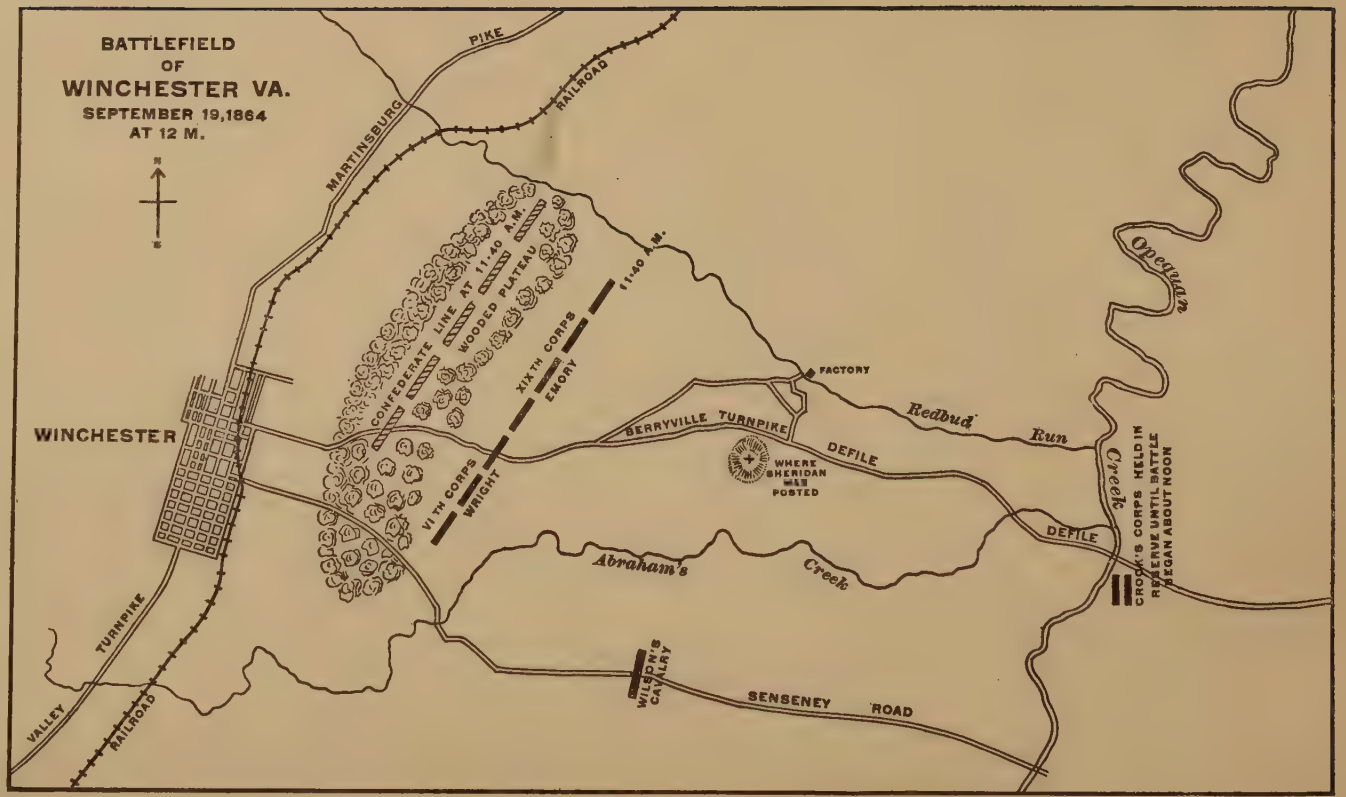
Late in the afternoon of the 3rd of September, the Confederate general, Anderson, in command of Kershaw's division on its way to join Lee's army at Petersburg, made an unexpected attack upon Crook's corps as it was preparing to encamp for the night near Berryville. Although a portion of Crook's line gave way in some confusion, the troops were quickly rallied and, as Sheridan put it, the enemy in turn "was handsomely repulsed, with a loss of 60 prisoners and over 200 killed and wounded." [1]

After waiting patiently for nearly two weeks, Sheridan succeeded in obtaining positive information that Early's forces had been depleted by the withdrawal of Kershaw's infantry division and Cutshaw's artillery brigade, both of these units having been sent to join Lee's army, whereupon he promptly decided to assume the offensive.[2]

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 23.
[2] *Personal Memoirs* of P. H. Sheridan, Vol. II, pp. 3-9.

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLE OF WINCHESTER


BATTLEFIELD
OF
WINCHESTER VA.
SEPTEMBER 19,1864
AT 12 M.
PIKE
RAILROAD
MARTINSBURG
CONFEDERATE LINE AT 11:40 A.M.
WOODED PLATEAU
XIX TH CORPS
EMORY
11:40 A.M.
FACTORY
Redbud Run
Opequan Creek
WINCHESTER
BERRYVILLE TURNPIKE
DEFILE
WHERE SHERIDAN WAS POSTED
VI TH CORPS
WRIGHT
DEFILE
Abraham's Creek
CROOK'S CORPS HELD IN RESERVE UNTIL BATTLE BEGAN ABOUT NOON
TURNPIKE
VALLEY
RAILROAD
WILSON'S CAVALRY
SENSENEY ROAD

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLE OF WINCHESTER

THE battle of Winchester (or, as it is sometimes called, the battle of the Opequan) was fought on the 19th of September, 1864, and resulted in the signal defeat of the Confederate forces under General Early.

I took part in this battle as chief of artillery of the Army of West Virginia (Crook's corps) and, so far as many of the features of this conflict were concerned, was either a participant or a personal observer. In regard to the earlier phases of the engagement, I had an exceptional opportunity of witnessing all that took place, due to circumstances which had better be related, even at the risk of entering into many personal details.

The statement has been made that the battle of Winchester was fought "with the precision of clockwork," an encomium which is not warranted by the actual facts, as the engagement was very far from being the successful execution of a well ordered and prearranged plan.

Sheridan had decided to occupy Newtown on the Valley turnpike, thus cutting Early's line of communications and forcing him to fight upon ground which he had not previously selected—this being an absolutely sound strategic

conception. Upon ascertaining, however, that the Confederate leader had divided his command and sent, September 18th, two of his four divisions to Martinsburg, Sheridan instantly decided to abandon the plan just mentioned and to attack forthwith the two Confederate divisions still remaining near Winchester, hoping to destroy them before the enemy's forces could be reunited.

It is one of the basic and best settled principles of grand tactics that a reserve, to be of value, must be within prompt supporting distance of the main body. This axiom was wholly disregarded, however, in the instance which we are about to discuss, as Crook's corps, which constituted Sheridan's reserve, besides being posted two and one-half miles from the main body, could only communicate with it by traversing an exceedingly narrow gorge, or defile, more than two miles in length, through which the Berryville and Winchester turnpike passes after leaving the Opequan.

In his anxiety to crush the two Confederate units in the vicinity of Winchester, Sheridan had not given, apparently, sufficient consideration to the location of his own reserve. It did not seem to have occurred to him that the position of Crook's corps was so far removed that it could not possibly come quickly to the assistance of the rest of the army, and as a sequence to this tactical error, the battle was nearly lost before the Union reserve could be brought into action.

At the beginning of the engagement, Early was able to hold his own against the Union advance, which gave him time to reunite his divided forces, and thus, by a strange fatuity, it came to pass that Sheridan, who was supposedly

bringing his whole command to assail one-half of Early's army, was in reality attacking the united forces of his opponent while his own were practically divided by reason of the faulty location of his reserve!

In Sheridan's second and more detailed report of the engagement, we are told that he was "holding Crook's command as a turning column to use only when the crisis of the battle occurred," [1] and that his original intention had been to put Crook in on the left flank; but these considerations did not justify Sheridan's disregard of a fundamental canon of the military art.

At three o'clock on the morning of the battle, the several corps of the Union army moved towards Winchester by the Berryville turnpike, preceded by the Third cavalry division under General J. H. Wilson, which cleared the way for the Federal advance after a sharp encounter with the enemy at the head of the long and narrow defile above mentioned. The Sixth and Nineteenth corps, in the order named, were followed by that of Crook, which was halted and held in reserve by Sheridan's order upon reaching the ford at which the turnpike crossed the Opequan, five miles from Winchester and two and one-half miles from the battlefield.

After awaiting orders for some time at the ford, Crook announced his intention of riding to the front, and with the other members of his staff I accompanied him, taking with me the artillery adjutant and a couple of orderlies. Upon emerging from the gorge into the open country, we found General Sheridan on a rounded eminence (or "mamelon" as the French would call

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 47.

it) to the left of the turnpike and which seemed to have been expressly designed by nature as a good vantage point from which to witness the impending conflict. Looking from this eminence across the turnpike which here bore to the west towards Winchester, the open fields at first rose very gradually, but further back they ascended much more rapidly and terminated in a largely wooded plateau extending from Abraham's Creek to Redbud Run, both tributaries of the Opequan. Upon this plateau Early awaited attack, his position extending across the turnpike and being *entirely concealed by the trees* from the eminence upon which our commander-in-chief had taken his post.

A few hundred yards from General Sheridan and close to the turnpike, the Sixth and Nineteenth corps were drawn up in two lines of battle, the Sixth on the left, but the cavalry division, which was still further to the left, was not in sight. As we arrived, Sheridan was giving his final instructions to the corps and division commanders who, with the officers accompanying them, as well as his own very numerous staff and his personal escort of several troops of the Sixth Regular cavalry, constituted an assemblage of at least three or four hundred persons, of which Crook and those with him formed a part.

As soon as the general officers had rejoined their respective commands, the Union army began its advance, precisely at twelve o'clock by my watch, which was probably too fast, as most of the official reports agree in stating that the attack began at 11:40 A. M. Our infantry lines moved across the fields and were quickly lost to sight as with lusty cheers they entered the woods. In a few moments

the firing began—at first a continuous rattle of musketry and booming of cannon, rapidly increasing in volume, then at various points great bursts of infantry fire—quick, sharp and intense—which repeatedly rose and fell above the general din of battle. It was not long before a small number of men belonging to the Nineteenth corps on our extreme right began to emerge from the woods, their dark blouses looking like black spots on the sunburnt vegetation: many others soon followed and in a few minutes the four brigades of the Second division of that corps, which constituted its first line of battle, broke to the rear and came pouring out of the woods in disgraceful confusion. To aggravate the situation, the bad behavior of the Nineteenth corps extended to a large portion of Rickett's Third division of the Sixth corps, which was on the left of the Nineteenth.

In brief, as matters then stood, more than one-half of the first Union line of battle had been driven back in great disorder by the Confederate counter-charge, the fugitives being in full view from General Sheridan's position. When the break began, he instantly despatched several members of his staff to check the movement to the rear. These were soon followed, as the situation became worse, by more and more officers and finally by his entire escort. Meantime he had turned to Crook, whose corps, as we have seen, had been halted at the ford across the Opequan, and directed him (this not later than about 12:20 by my watch) to move his command to the front as quickly as possible. Crook instantly ordered his whole staff to ride back at a gallop and hasten his corps forward, and as I was starting with

the others he turned to me and said: "It is not worth your while to go. Send your officer and an orderly to direct the batteries to move forward with the infantry," whereupon I remained.

The large assemblage of which Sheridan was the central figure had now completely melted away, and in a very few minutes there were only four persons left on the rounded eminence so recently crowded with officers and men. On his horse and to the front sat General Sheridan, silent and immovable: a few feet behind him were General Crook and myself, and immediately in rear of us was my orderly, Bugler Richard Wende, of Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery.

The Third division of the Sixth corps which had given way was in very great disorder and in no condition to renew the attack; while the men of the Nineteenth corps were in still worse shape and seemed absolutely demoralized. It can be truthfully asserted that throughout the whole engagement the Nineteenth corps, with some creditable exceptions, failed to stand up to its work and effectively support the rest of the Federal army. Many of its regiments, which came from a number of different states, had performed long tours of garrison duty in Louisiana and other parts of the South and had seen but very little field service. Although the material of which the corps was composed was excellent, it lacked discipline, as already stated, and to a very great extent was without the leadership of the many professional soldiers who by their ability and experience had so largely contributed to the splendid record of the Sixth corps.

Notwithstanding the discomfiture of the greater part of the Union first line of battle, Getty's Second and Russell's First divisions of the Sixth corps, though hidden by the trees, maintained their positions and were still warmly engaged, as indicated by the firing; but it was evident that they would be outflanked and compelled to fall back if the Confederate advance was maintained. The situation was extremely critical and the Union army was on the verge of a serious defeat, if not of an absolute disaster, it being patent to all that considerable time must necessarily elapse before the reserve (Crook's corps) could possibly reach the field in view of its distance from the main body and of the difficulty of its passage through the narrow gorge, over two miles long, heretofore described. As it was impossible, on account of the trees, to see what was taking place on the firing line, so intense was the nervous strain and so profound the anxiety that the minutes appeared like hours: finally, after a suspense which seemed almost interminable, Major George A. Forsyth [1] of General Sheridan's staff, galloped up and reported to the commander-in-chief that Russell had been killed, but that Upton, with his brigade, had struck the Confederate line in flank and arrested its forward movement. This last piece of information was a tremendous relief and the arrival of Crook's corps was now awaited with comparative serenity. In spite of every effort, however, it was not until 1:50 P. M. by my watch (probably 1:30 by the correct time) that the head of Crook's column emerged from the gorge, so greatly had its movement been impeded by the fugitives as well as

[1] Later Colonel, U.S.A., who died September 12, 1915.

by various obstacles in the very long and narrow defile through which it had to march.

Turning now to that portion of the conflict entirely hidden by the trees from the rounded eminence on which Sheridan had taken his position, my narrative is based upon the very detailed account given me personally upon a number of occasions by my friend and classmate at West Point, the lamented Upton.[1] His statement, which is confirmed in every particular by the official reports, was substantially as follows:—

"As you know, I belonged to the Sixth corps and was in command of the Second brigade of Russell's First division which constituted the second line of battle of our corps, my brigade consisting of the Sixty-fifth and One hundred and twenty-first New York Volunteers, together with Mackenzie's Second Connecticut heavy artillery serving as infantry, a very large regiment and numerically as strong as the two New York regiments combined. When the Nineteenth corps and most of our Third division gave way and broke to the rear, General Wright, commanding the Sixth corps, ordered our second line of battle to move to the front [2] and my brigade then advanced in two lines, the Second Connecticut in the first line. Soon afterwards, our West Point classmate, Colonel Jacob Ford Kent [3] of Wright's staff,

[1] Emory Upton, born in New York State in 1839, graduated from the Military Academy May 6, 1861. After serving in the Regular artillery he became colonel of the One hundred twenty-first New York Volunteer Infantry and, May 12, 1864, brigadier-general of Volunteers. Was the author of the infantry tactics which bear his name (1867) and of the Military Policy of the United States (1880). He died March 14, 1881.

[2] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 150.

[3] Born in 1835 and died December 22, 1918, as Major-General, U.S.A. retired.

directed me to move to the right.[1] I obeyed the order, marched my brigade, still in two lines of battle, by the right flank, crossed the turnpike and halted my second line in a narrow strip of timber and again faced it to the front, but continued the movement of my first line beyond the right and towards the rear of the second, and placed it in an oblique position to the advancing enemy. As soon as the Confederates came within two hundred yards, I ordered Mackenzie to fire,[2] upon which the enemy fell back in great disorder. Then forming my whole brigade in line I continued, upon my own initiative, to strike the enemy in flank, driving him back and inflicting heavy losses in killed and wounded. Russell had fallen, although I did not know it at the time, and while I had received no orders I saw that the only thing to do was to change the direction of my brigade so as to take the Confederate line in flank, and this I did as rapidly as possible."

It cannot be disputed that Upton's prompt action averted a general retrograde movement of the whole Union army, for had not the enemy's advance been checked, the two divisions of the Sixth corps, which still held their ground, would have been outflanked and forced to fall back. Russell having been killed, there was no one on the spot to give directions, but Upton's military instincts and professional ability prompted him, without a moment's hesitation, to make the proper dispositions and to deal a blow which shattered the Confederate advance and changed the whole aspect of the battle. Upton, be it said, never received the full credit to which he was justly entitled, as his own

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 173.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

official report is naturally free from self-laudation, and Russell, his division commander, who undoubtedly would have done him full justice, had met a soldier's death on the field of battle. It is true that Sheridan, in his preliminary report made on the following day, September 20th, stated that "this mishap" (meaning thereby the complete rout of more than one-half of his first line of battle) "was soon remedied by the good conduct of Upton's brigade of the First division, Sixth corps," [1] and that in his detailed report of the engagement made some sixteen months later, February 3, 1866, he used the following language: "For the moment the contest was uncertain, but the gallant attack of General Upton's brigade of the Sixth corps restored the line of battle." [2]

In neither of these quotations was there any recognition of the fact that Upton, entirely upon his own initiative, had done the right thing at the vital moment: on the contrary, in his latter report, General Sheridan said: "It was at this juncture that I ordered a brigade of Russell's division of the Sixth corps to wait until the enemy's attacking column presented its flank, then to strike it with vigor. This was handsomely done, the brigade being led by General Russell and its commander, Upton, in person." [3]

Almost every statement in the two sentences just quoted is flatly contradicted by the official reports of the subordinate commanders. Far from receiving any direct orders from Sheridan, Upton's report expressly states that he was instructed to move his brigade to the right by Colonel

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 26.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

Kent of General Wright's staff—the Confederates were not advancing in column, as General Sheridan alleges, but in line [1]—and, further, the brigade was not led by both Russell and Upton in person, for the excellent reason that previous to the repulse of the advancing Confederates, the brave Russell had met a soldier's death at a point some distance to the left while moving forward with his Third brigade under Colonel Edwards.[2] Finally, I can positively affirm from my own knowledge that the trees prevented General Sheridan and those near him from having the slightest idea of Upton's effective attack and that we were in profound ignorance thereof until informed by Major George A. Forsyth.

In his "Memoirs," written long afterwards, General Sheridan goes still further, inasmuch as he claims to have directed the second line of battle of the Sixth corps (Russell's division) to move forward to support the first line, his precise words being: "I ordered Russell's reserve division to be put into action." This does not accord, however, with the official report of General Wright, in command of the Sixth corps, who, writing one month after the battle, used the following language: "Seeing that the fate of the day depended upon the employment of this force (Russell's division) I at once sent it in," [3] a statement which, as we have seen, is corroborated by Upton's narrative.

As already mentioned, it was impossible for Sheridan to see, on account of the timber, whether the second line

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 173.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

of battle was or was not in action. Moreover, as the commander-in-chief who was directing the movement of the whole army, it would have been entirely impracticable for him to have gone in person to the wooded area in which the Sixth corps was fighting and to decide when its second line of battle was to advance, or to give detailed directions in regard to the movements and conduct of Upton's brigade.

In justice, however, to General Sheridan, the fact should be emphasized that during the many months which elapsed from the close of the Valley campaign until the time he submitted his detailed report, he had been almost incessantly occupied by most engrossing and responsible duties at the South and elsewhere; and indeed, in a communication to the chief of staff of the Army made more than a year afterwards, April 26, 1866, he expressly said that his report had been long delayed by the many changes to which he had been subjected and which had *separated him from the sub-reports* (reports of subordinate commanders), as well as by the arduous labors entailed by his various responsibilities.[1]

In describing the salient features of any general engagement, if the details as given are to be of value, they must be derived from the reports of the subordinate commanders who were on the spot, who had cognizance of all that occurred and who made their statements as soon as possible after the events took place, when everything was fresh in their minds. Unfortunately, as Sheridan himself admits, he had no access to the reports of his subordinate commanders during the preparation of his belated

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 40.

second report of the battle of Winchester, and this undoubtedly explains why many of the statements therein made so often conflict with the contemporaneous accounts of those who were on the spot and commanded the various units of his fighting force.

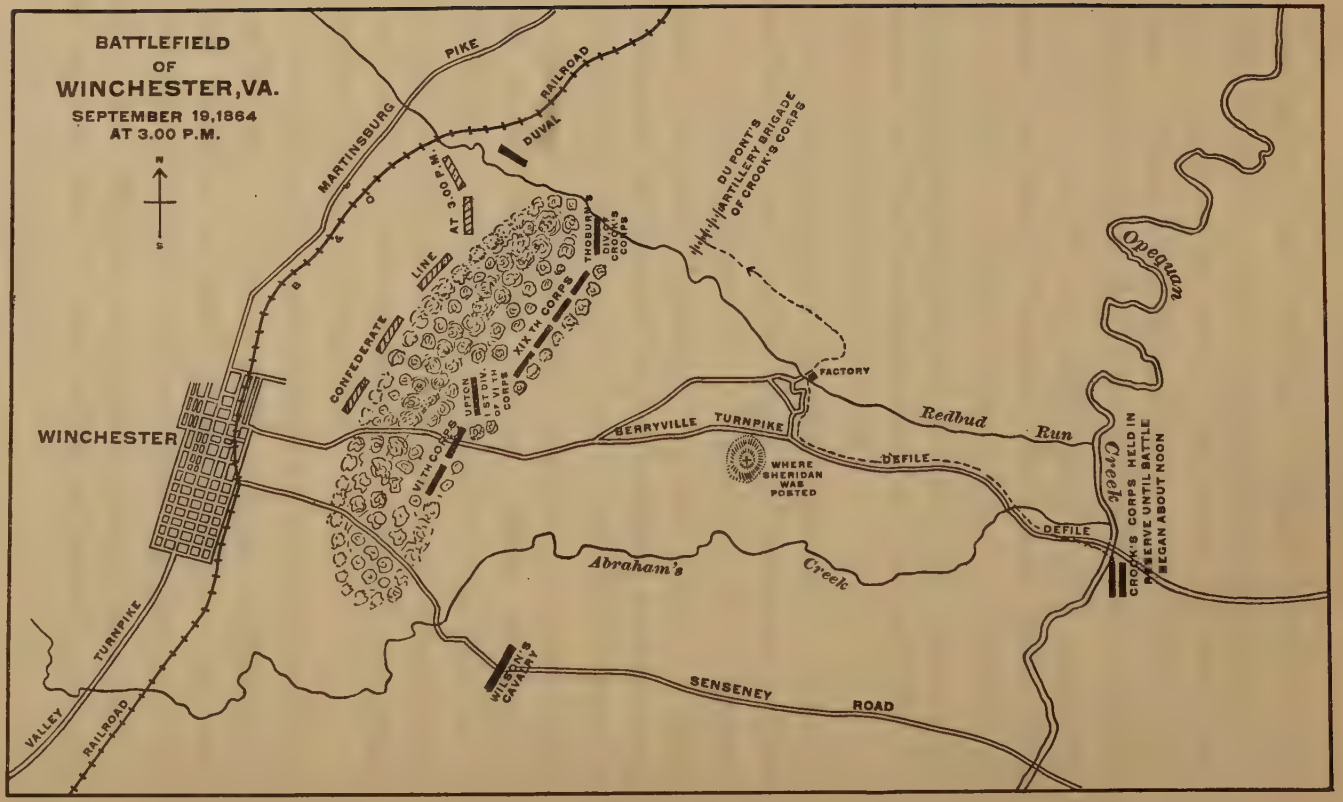
While, as we have seen, Upton's sound military judgment and prompt action had saved the day, it was Crook's military ability, his capacity for instant decision, and, above all, his possession of the moral courage to take the initiative without a moment's hesitation that finally determined the Union victory. Upon the arrival of Crook's corps on the field of battle, Sheridan's orders, which I personally heard him give, were substantially, if not absolutely, in these words: "Crook, put in your corps to support Emory (commanding the Nineteenth corps) and look well for the right flank." These orders were at once carried out: Thoburn's First division was placed in position behind the right of the Nineteenth corps, whence a little later it moved forward at General Emory's request and occupied the extreme right of his former line of battle, relieving Dwight's division of the Nineteenth corps which took post farther to the left: Crook then moved promptly in person with his other infantry division under Duval and the artillery brigade under Du Pont, taking a country road which at first bore towards the right until it crossed the Redbud Run at a very primitive manufacturing establishment styled, as I remember it, "The Factory," and then inclined to the left and front. Our column, with Crook leading, abandoned the road soon after crossing the Redbud and moved to the right in an oblique direction across a field until we reached the picket

line on the extreme right flank of the Nineteenth corps, the pickets to our surprise reporting that they had not yet seen any signs of the enemy. We were now in an open expanse of comparatively level and treeless tableland extending far beyond Early's line of battle and found that we had turned his left flank, which, while apparently resting in a fringe of trees and bushes along Redbud Run, was in reality, as we were to discover later, protected by an exceedingly deep and difficult morass which skirted the banks of that little watercourse but was not visible to the naked eye until very close at hand.

Crook instantly ordered Duval to form his division in two lines of battle at right angles to the general position of the Confederates and to prepare for immediate attack. He also directed that the artillery column be halted and the batteries held in readiness to support the infantry, if the nature of the ground permitted, as soon as the movement was sufficiently developed. As commander of the artillery I gave the necessary orders, but remained with General Crook, being a member of his staff; and I may say here that it was my invariable rule never to stay behind with my batteries when the conditions were such that they could not go into action.

Coincident with these dispositions, Crook ordered Captain William McKinley,[1] a member of the corps staff, to direct Thoburn, our other division commander, to move forward to the charge as soon as Duval advanced, and, this done, to find Sheridan as quickly as possible and report to him in person that our corps, which had turned the enemy's

[1] Later President of the United States.


BATTLEFIELD
OF
WINCHESTER, VA.
SEPTEMBER 19, 1864
AT 3.00 P.M.
N
S
MARTINSBURG
PIKE
RAILROAD
DUVAL
W. & P. R.R.
AT 3.00 P.M.
THOBURN
BIDDLE
CROOK'S CORPS
DU PONT'S
ARTILLERY BRIGADE
OF CROOK'S CORPS
Opequan
CONFEDERATE
LINE
XIX TH CORPS
VIth CORPS
1ST DIV.
VIth
CORPS
FACTORY
WINCHESTER
BERRYVILLE
TURNPIKE
Redbud
Run
DEFILE
WHERE
SHERIDAN
WAS
POSTED
Creek
CROOK'S CORPS HELD IN
RESERVE UNTIL BATTLE
BEGAN ABOUT NOON
Abraham's
Creek
WILSON'S
CAVALRY
SENSENEY
ROAD
VALLEY
TURNPIKE
RAILROAD

flank, would attack immediately and to ask that our movement be supported by an advance of the whole Union line.

General Sheridan has stated in his "Memoirs" that he "joined Crook" at this time and "directed him to attack the moment all of Duval's men were in line" [1]—assertions which, to my personal knowledge, are wholly inexact. I was riding by General Crook's side from the beginning of the movement of our corps until long after the flank attack had developed and heard every word of the orders he gave McKinley and can further state most positively that Sheridan did not join Crook nor send him any order whatsoever. The actual facts, however, were as follows: upon learning from McKinley that our (Crook's) corps had turned the Confederate left and was about to attack, Sheridan personally hastened to our First infantry division under Thoburn, then on the right of the Nineteenth corps, and directed him to cooperate with Duval, thus ratifying and confirming the orders which Crook had already given. This incident, which is set forth in Thoburn's official report,[2] was no doubt the basis of the erroneous statements above quoted.

Duval's assault on the enemy's flank was made at precisely three o'clock by my watch, by a strange coincidence three hours to the minute after the launching of the general Union attack at noon. With a tremendous shout which resounded along the lines of the Nineteenth corps, our Second division rushed forward to the charge, but at that very instant a body of cavalry suddenly loomed up in the

[1] *Personal Memoirs* of P. H. Sheridan, Vol. II, p. 24.
[2] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 369.

distance on the right flank of Duval's line of battle, which, as we have seen, was perpendicular to that of the enemy. Crook with his staff at once rode towards them to ascertain whether they were friends or foes. Upon drawing nearer, we made out that they were Federal soldiers, and in a few moments recognized General Merritt,[1] commander of Torbert's First cavalry division. Among the officers of Merritt's staff, was another classmate of mine, his aide-de-camp, Captain McQuesten,[2] whom I had not seen since we left the Military Academy in May, 1861; but as we were all riding at a gallop, we were only able to exchange a very few words: he was killed, poor fellow, about an hour later in the splendid charge made by Merritt's cavalry division, its casualties during the whole battle exceeding those of the two other cavalry divisions combined (Averell's and J. H. Wilson's).

After rapidly explaining the situation to Merritt and insisting upon the vital importance of the cavalry's closing in upon the Confederate rear as quickly as possible, Crook with his staff rode in the direction of his own corps, but went too far to the front supposing its position to be more advanced than was actually the case. Upon gaining the crest of a small elevation, we suddenly found ourselves some three hundred yards behind the Confederate infantry line which was firing upon our troops as it slowly gave way by the right flank in excellent order. Fortunately we were not observed and, needless to say, did not tarry long in that

[1] Later Major-General, U.S.A., who died December 3, 1910.

[2] James F. McQuesten, born in New Hampshire in 1835 and graduated from the Military Academy May 6, 1861, being appointed second-lieutenant of the Second Dragoons. Was later first-lieutenant and then captain of the Second Cavalry, and aide-de-camp to General Merritt at the time of his death.

position but were able to cross the Redbud a little lower down and found Duval's men on a wide and generally level stretch of land along that stream, intersected by a number of stone walls and studded here and there by rocks and bushes.

The momentum of Duval's advance had been checked and both of his lines of battle thrown into the utmost disorder by the extreme difficulty of crossing the morass, which was only accomplished after most prodigious efforts, as shown by the official report [1] of one of his brigade commanders, Colonel Rutherford B. Hayes, later President of the United States. There had been no breaking to the rear on the part of the infantry of our corps and we found our brave men lying on the ground and returning the Confederate fire as best they could. General Crook and every member of his staff rode among the recumbent soldiers and used every effort to encourage the men to rise and move forward. I was so absorbed in this task that I did not notice for some time the disappearance of the general and the other members of his staff with the exception of Captain Cherrington, our corps provost-marshal. As he and I had no idea as to the direction in which the others had gone, there was nothing to be done but to stick to our work, in which we were not without success: at this juncture my favorite horse was shot under me but fortunately was able to carry me off the field; my bugler's steed was also wounded, as were the horses of Cherrington and his orderly—we four being the only mounted men on that part of the field, but I never understood how we got

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, pp. 401-2.

off so lightly, as the Confederate fire was exceedingly heavy.

Upon the return of General Crook with the other members of the staff, we learned that he had gone to a certain brigade commander of the Nineteenth corps and urged him, in tremendously strong and emphatic language, to move his men forward to enfilade the stone walls under cover of which the enemy was checking the advance of our troops and those of the Sixth corps. There he met General Upton upon a similar errand, the official report of the latter showing that in spite of his expostulations, the brigade commander in question failed to advance and open fire, upon which Upton placed one of his Sixth corps regiments (Mackenzie's) directly in front of the Nineteenth corps brigade and dislodged the enemy by enfilading the walls.[1] This episode established a contact between the Sixth corps and Crook's corps, which was maintained to the end of the battle, the Nineteenth corps troops complacently remaining in second line. Beyond some assistance rendered by the First division of this last named corps to our First division before the latter advanced to the charge, the Nineteenth corps troops failed to cooperate with our attack and clung to their original position in the woods until finally ordered by Sheridan to the extreme left of the army to support Wilson's cavalry division in an unsuccessful effort to cut off the enemy's retreat.

Meantime our First division under Thoburn, which had sprung forward to the attack with the utmost courage and enthusiasm, effected a junction with Duval's left, and after

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 162.

a very stubborn resistance the enemy at last gave way, closely pressed by the triumphant infantry of our whole corps, now on the right of the Sixth corps. As the Confederates fell back in the direction of Winchester, they unmasked a log crossing over the Redbud which was passable for artillery and I instantly ordered the batteries forward, but night was falling and the battle almost over before they were able to reach me: Light Battery B of the Fifth Regular Artillery, however, arrived in time to go into position near the town of Winchester and to fire, under my direction, a number of rounds at the retreating foe.

The victory was now complete: the Union army captured five guns, nine battle flags and many prisoners, losing, however, in killed, wounded and missing, a little over 5,000 men, while the total casualties of the Confederates were about 2,900.

It will be noted that while Crook was ordered to "support Emory" and to "look well for the right flank," Sheridan did not expressly direct him to attempt any turning movement. To effectively carry out the spirit of Sheridan's orders, however, it was obviously Crook's duty to ascertain whether any hostile force threatened our right. In so doing he not only found that such was not the case but that he had turned the Confederate left, when, entirely upon his own responsibility, he instantly made the movement which decided the Union victory. In this connection, the following passage from the official report of General Averell, commanding the Second cavalry division, is of peculiar interest: "At about this time (3:00 P. M.) the attack of the infantry of the Army of West Virginia (Crook's corps)

was made, and it became at once visible to both armies that we had gained the day." [1]

Before leaving this subject, it may be well to notice General Sheridan's version of his orders to Crook, as given in his detailed report made, as we have seen, some sixteen months after the battle was fought. The language of this report is as follows: "Crook was directed to act as a turning column, to find the left of the enemy's line, strike it in flank or rear, break it up, and that I would order a half wheel of the line of battle to support him." [2]

While these thoughts were no doubt passing through Sheridan's mind, the language just quoted does not comport with the terse and positive expressions which would have been unquestionably used when everything was in the highest state of tension, when the fate of the battle was wholly undecided, and when the character of the ground upon which the Confederate left rested, as well as its precise location, were alike unknown. As one who was actually present, I can only reaffirm that the substantial words used were, "Crook, put in your corps to support Emory and look well for the right flank." It should perhaps be explained that I was within a few feet of General Sheridan when he gave the order just quoted, that I followed his words with the greatest possible eagerness and closest attention, as upon them depended the disposition of our corps and the part it was to take in the battle then raging, and that I can only reiterate that Sheridan's order to Crook,

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 498.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

which is indelibly engraved upon my memory, was substantially (and I can affirm *exactly*) in the terms heretofore mentioned.

In closing this discussion, attention is called to the following statement in General Crook's official report written within a month after the engagement took place, which entirely corroborates my assertions: "I was instructed by General Sheridan to place my command on the right and rear of the Nineteenth corps and to look out for our right, as the enemy was reported to be moving in that direction." [1]

Had Crook been content to await further orders from the commander-in-chief instead of taking the immediate action which his own judgment dictated, many moments of vital importance would have been lost, and the Confederates, profiting by the approach of darkness, would have escaped with largely diminished losses and our victory would have been less complete and decisive.

Passing now from the realm of probabilities and possibilities to that of actual facts, Crook was clearly a very prominent factor in bringing about the victory at Winchester which had so much to do with establishing Sheridan's military reputation. Notwithstanding this, in neither of the latter's official reports nor in his "Memoirs" can be found a single word of personal commendation of Crook, and the sole acknowledgment of his services is contained in Sheridan's telegram to Grant of September 23, 1864, recommending Crook's promotion from Brevet Major-General to the full rank of Major-General on

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 361.

account of his "good conduct" in the battles of Winchester and Fisher's Hill.[1]

No military leader can achieve important success in the field without the loyal cooperation of those who serve under him and are responsible for the various units of which his command is composed, be these army corps, divisions, brigades or even smaller organizations. When an inferior in rank has satisfactorily carried out the specific instructions of his chief, such as the assault or defence of a certain position, his services very rarely, if ever, pass unnoticed; but it frequently happens that no adequate recognition is made of the subordinate who, when unforeseen contingencies arise, possesses the rare and exceptional capacity for prompt action upon his own initiative—whose soldierly perceptions enable him to determine what ought to be done—and who fearlessly assumes the responsibility of doing it. Although the martial instincts and moral courage of such a subordinate are prime factors in determining his military merit, these are precisely the qualities which so often pass unmentioned, as in the cases of Upton and Crook at the battle of Winchester.

The annals of military history, however, record many exceptions to this general tendency—or rule, if we may so call it—one of the most prominent cases being that of Desaix, who, wholly without orders, marched his command towards the sound of the cannon and arrived on the battlefield just in time to avert a French defeat at Marengo.

It is perhaps needless to say, in conclusion, that I have always most keenly regretted that the nature of the ground

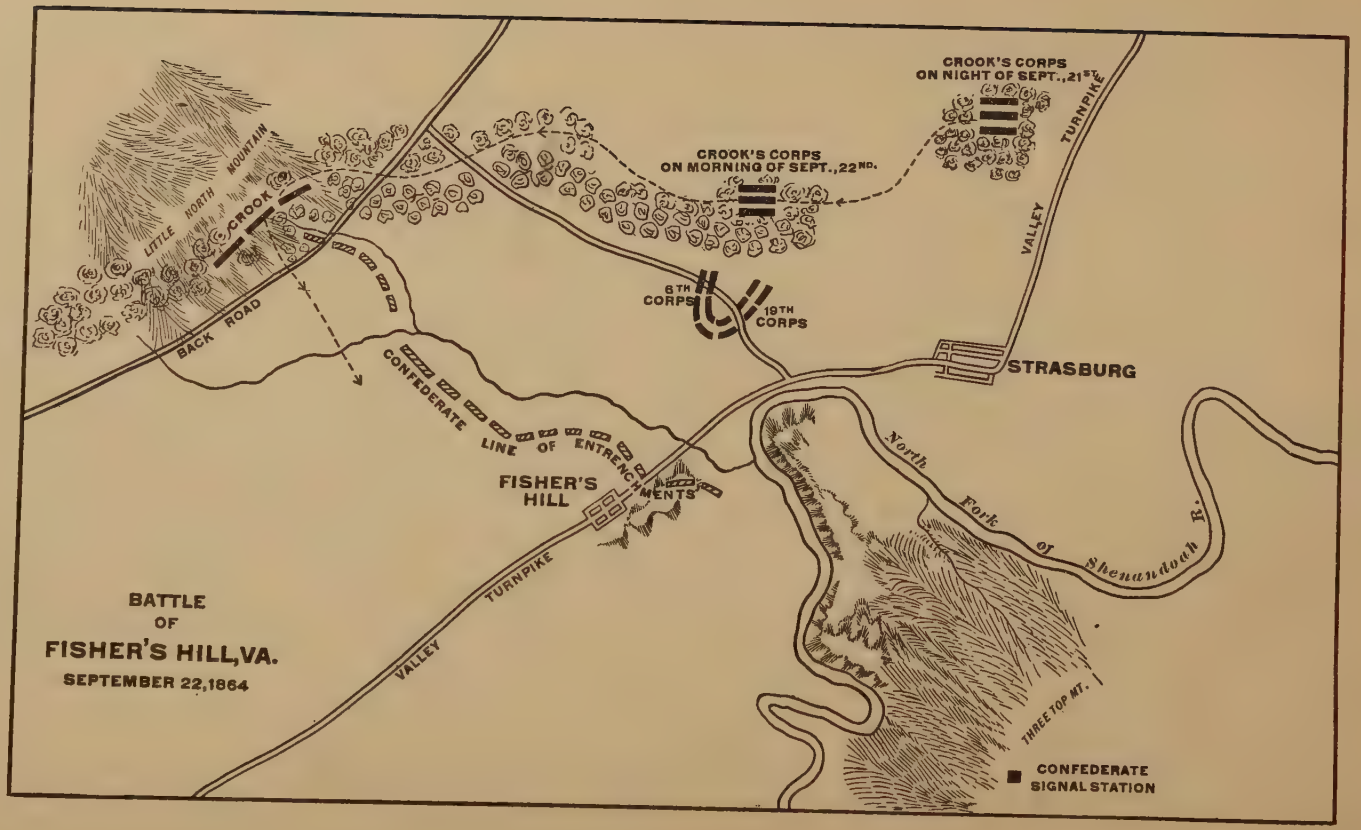
[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part II, p. 153.

made it impossible for my batteries to take a more active part in the turning movement which decided the battle. My personal services, however, were mentioned in General Crook's official report, which referred to me by name as one of the officers of his staff from whom he had "received invaluable assistance" and who had, "amidst the thickest of the fight, cheered the men onward and encouraged them by example to do their whole duty."[1] I also received upon his recommendation, the commission of brevet major in the Regular Army for "gallant and meritorious conduct" both in this engagement and in that of Fisher's Hill, which took place three days later.

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 363.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF FISHER'S HILL


CROOK'S CORPS
ON NIGHT OF SEPT., 21ST
CROOK'S CORPS
ON MORNING OF SEPT., 22ND.
LITTLE NORTH MOUNTAIN
CROOK
BACK ROAD
6TH CORPS
19TH CORPS
VALLEY TURNPIKE
STRASBURG
CONFEDERATE LINE OF ENTRENCHMENTS
FISHER'S HILL
North Fork of Shenandoah R.
BATTLE
OF
FISHER'S HILL, VA.
SEPTEMBER 22, 1864
VALLEY TURNPIKE
THREE TOP MT.
CONFEDERATE SIGNAL STATION

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF FISHER'S HILL

ON the 20th of September, the day after the battle of Winchester, the Union army moved at daylight in pursuit of the enemy, the cavalry leading and our corps following the Sixth and Nineteenth corps, which marched abreast on either side of the Valley turnpike. We halted near Cedar Creek, about four and one-half miles from Fisher's Hill, where Early awaited us in a very strong defensive position which had been made still more formidable by entrenchments and redoubts.

The Confederate lines extended for some three or four miles from Little North Mountain, a portion of the Alleghanies, to the Massanutten range, which rises abruptly at the water's edge of the North Fork of the Shenandoah near the mouth of Cedar Creek, and after stretching southward for some thirty miles, comes to an end, as suddenly as it begins, at a point not far from Harrisonburg and near the South Fork of the same river. As the Massanutten range is nearly parallel to the Blue Ridge as well as to the Alleghanies, it divides the Valley of Virginia into two valleys, one known as the Main Valley, across which the Confederate army was entrenched, and the other, much narrower and easily defensible by a small force, called the Luray Valley. There are no gaps or passes in the Massa-

nutten range, and as its sides are extremely steep and precipitous, it constitutes an effectual barrier to ordinary military movements from one valley to the other.

After reconnoitering Early's position, Sheridan decided that "a direct assault would entail an unnecessary destruction of life and besides be of doubtful result," and, as stated in his "Memoirs," resolved "to move Crook unperceived, if possible, over the eastern face of Little North Mountain whence he could strike the left and rear of the Confederate line." [1] Notwithstanding this assertion, it was fully understood at the time by everybody at our corps headquarters, as I distinctly recall, that Crook had suggested this movement and asked permission to move his infantry along the almost precipitous slope of Little North Mountain so as to turn the enemy's left. At all events, Thoburn and Hayes, his division commanders, were summoned to Sheridan's headquarters in consultation as to the feasibility of the plan.

Four days after the battle of Fisher's Hill, September 26th, one of these division commanders, Colonel Rutherford B. Hayes, wrote as follows to his uncle in Ohio: "At Fisher's Hill the turning of the Rebel left was planned and executed by Crook against the opinions of the other corps generals," a statement which, so far as it relates to Crook's conception of the project, is fully corroborated by my personal recollections. The letter just quoted goes on to say: "General Sheridan is a whole-souled, brave man and believes in Crook, his old class and room-mate at West

[1] *Personal Memoirs* of P. H. Sheridan, Vol. II, p. 35.

Point," but "intellectually he is not General Crook's equal, who is the brains of this army." [1]

A careful consideration of Sheridan's military plans abundantly shows that he possessed an alert and active mind and it is possible that Hayes' admiration for his corps commander may have led him to underestimate the intellectual ability of his commanding general. Without discussing here the relative mentalities of Sheridan and Crook, we may remark that there was a radical difference in their temperaments. Crook was a notably keen and clear-headed man—genial, patient, low speaking and inclined to reticence, whose equanimity was rarely if ever disturbed even under the most trying circumstances. Sheridan, on the other hand, was naturally eager and impulsive, which characteristics, as we have seen, seem to have fully accounted for his abrupt change of plan at the battle of Winchester on the 19th of September.

The Confederates had established a signal station on the summit of Three Top, as the most northern Massanutten peak is called, from which point they completely overlooked Sheridan's army. This gave them full information in regard to its position and, while daylight lasted, as to every movement of the Federal troops. To meet this situation, the two infantry divisions of Crook's corps were transferred after dark on the 20th to a piece of timber north of Cedar Creek, and on the following night were moved across that stream, still unperceived by the enemy, to a position on the right of the Sixth corps, in a tract of wood-

[1] *Diary and Letters* of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, Vol. II, p. 514.

land near the Back Road which connected with the forest growth of Little North Mountain.

The turning movement of Crook's corps which involved a long march along its precipitous slopes intersected by numerous ravines, was begun on the following morning, September 22nd, and by 3:00 P. M. our two divisions, moving in parallel columns along the mountain side, had reached a point well beyond the enemy's flank, when they were faced to the left and brought into line. Crook ordered an almost immediate advance and his infantry, rushing down the steep declivity, gave a tremendous cheer as they reached the foot of the mountain, when the Confederates, taken almost completely by surprise, fled in great confusion and made but little or no resistance.

General Early calls the battle of Fisher's Hill an "affair," but it was an affair which cost him 20 pieces of artillery, 1,100 prisoners and a great many caissons and limbers, together with a large amount of artillery ammunition, entrenching tools and small-arms. His description of the battle is in part as follows: "After a very brief contest, my whole force retired in considerable confusion, but the men and officers of the artillery displayed great coolness, fighting to the very last." [1] The truth is that it was an utter rout and the only Confederates who stood their ground were a few artillerists who fired as long as possible, knowing that they could not possibly save their guns. As an illustration of the panic that prevailed, I personally observed that the sole outlet of a large enclosed fieldwork

[1] *Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War between the States,* by Jubal A. Early, p. 430.

was completely blocked by the collision of two pieces of Confederate artillery which had attempted to make their exit at the same moment, with the result that both pieces had been overturned with carriages and wheels more or less interlocked, while the twelve horses were pinioned to the ground by their traces and intermingled in all sorts of fantastic attitudes—an incident which effectually prevented the withdrawal from the redoubt of the remaining pieces, which were all captured.

In marked contrast with Early's account, Sheridan says that the enemy "threw down their arms and fled in the greatest confusion, abandoning most of their artillery. . . . I do not think that there ever was an army so badly routed." [1]

As it was impossible for the artillery brigade to take part in the flank movement on account of the nature of the ground, I personally accompanied the corps staff, which, when the infantry was about to attack, was just behind the line of battle. Colonel James W. Forsyth, of General Sheridan's staff, and Colonel Douglas, commissary of Crook's corps, were sitting with me on a log at the side of a wide path or trail which ran obliquely southward down the mountain side, and Douglas, a stout man who did not seem to particularly relish a scramble on foot down the steep declivity, suggested that we should wait until the line had moved a little forward, when the path would be unmasked and we could proceed on horseback. Hardly had the line, however, disappeared among the trees—a matter of a few seconds—when we were fired upon and our surrender de-

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part II, p. 152.

manded in highly profane and insulting language. Needless to say, we sprang into the saddle and moved off in the opposite direction and all succeeded in escaping, but in the thick timber my two comrades were soon lost to sight. The ground was so rough that my horse could not go out of a walk though I urged him over the rocks as fast as possible, constantly looking over my shoulder to see if the pursuers were likely to outstrip me, in which event it was my intention to abandon the horse, feeling confident that they could not overtake me on foot. After a few anxious moments, finding that no one was following, I rode directly down the mountain and soon reached the firing line.

Early's routed army was closely followed by our cavalry throughout the entire night and at daylight on the following morning the pursuit was taken up by the whole army and continued for several days, but Crook's corps did not go farther than Harrisonburg, where we remained for some little time.

CHAPTER XI

FROM FISHER'S HILL TO CEDAR CREEK

CHAPTER XI

FROM FISHER'S HILL TO CEDAR CREEK

AS Sheridan's lines of communication were unduly extended, he fell back on the 6th of October. Previous to this movement and while it was in progress, the Union cavalry scoured the whole Valley from Staunton northward and, as a military necessity, destroyed all forage and other supplies which could be of value to the Confederates, so as to prevent them from quartering their mounted troops in that region during the coming winter.

Our retrograde movement ceased on the 10th of October when Sheridan's army was halted on the northerly side of Cedar Creek, Early following closely and resuming his old position at Fisher's Hill, which extended from the slopes of the Alleghanies to the Massanutten range, his army consisting of five divisions of infantry with more than forty pieces of artillery and of the cavalry commands of Lomax and Rosser as well as a small brigade of horsemen under Paine.

Cedar Creek is a comparatively small stream of steep banks and tortuous curves which flows from its source in the Alleghany Mountains in a generally oblique direction to the Valley turnpike and empties into the North Fork of the Shenandoah, not very far below the point where the Massa-

nutten range so abruptly and precipitously rises from the water's edge on the south side of that river.

Sheridan posted his troops as follows—the Nineteenth corps, which was ordered to entrench, on the north side of Cedar Creek, westerly from the Valley turnpike to the mouth of Meadow Brook (or Marsh Run, as it is sometimes called), a small tributary of the Creek and running almost parallel to that highway.

The Sixth corps was held in reserve and placed on the west side of Meadow Brook and to the right and rear of the Nineteenth corps.

Crook's corps, to which I belonged, was also ordered to entrench and extended in a southeasterly direction from its connection with the Nineteenth at the Valley turnpike, its position being somewhat more southerly than that of the Nineteenth, as the breastworks followed the general trend of Cedar Creek to the southeast. The artillery of our corps was on its right in positions selected by the engineers at Army headquarters, and one battery (that of Gibbs, on Crook's extreme right flank and not far from the left of the Nineteenth corps) commanded the ford and turnpike bridge across the Creek. The other batteries were posted at some distance from that highway on a narrow ridge with almost precipitous slopes both to the north and south, the axis of this ridge, which was quite elevated, being generally perpendicular to the turnpike and the terrain towards the south being very rough and broken as well as largely covered with trees and undergrowth. One of Crook's infantry divisions (Thoburn's) was on the left of the artillery, but its line, though strengthened by an abatis,

was very thin in places, as it had been unduly drawn out so that its left could occupy a hill which commanded the junction of Cedar Creek with the Shenandoah. The troops on this hill, which constituted the extreme left flank of Sheridan's army, were entirely without a supporting or covering force of any kind, as Crook's other infantry division was held in reserve behind the center of his line.

Two of the three cavalry divisions were placed on the right flank, one in reserve near the Sixth corps, while the other, at some distance to the rear of the first, held the Back Road, which is parallel to the turnpike and about three miles from it to the west. The remaining cavalry division under Powell was pushed out towards Front Royal, some ten miles away, and was supposed to cover the left flank of the Union forces. Although from a purely strategic point of view the location of this division might seem to have had some possible justification, it left Powell completely out of touch with the rest of the army—in brief, his assignment to the position just described was a repetition on a smaller scale of the tactical error that so nearly cost us the battle of Winchester, where Crook's command which constituted the reserve was posted beyond prompt supporting distance of the main body.

General Wesley Merritt, in "The Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," [1] refers as follows to the Union position at Cedar Creek: "There were many serious objections to it as a position for defence. The approaches from all points of the enemy's stronghold at Fisher's Hill were through wooded ravines in which the growth and undulations con-

[1] Vol. IV, p. 514.

cealed the movement of troops; and for this reason, as well as the proximity of Fisher's Hill, the pickets protecting its front could not be thrown, without danger of capture, sufficiently far out to give ample warning of the advance of the enemy."

Though not mentioned by Merritt, the Confederate signal station on Three Top Mountain, to which we have previously referred, constituted another very grave objection to the line upon which Sheridan had posted his command, as it enabled the enemy to obtain full information in regard to the location and movements of the Union troops.

Nor was the weakness of our position unperceived by General Crook, who made a strong protest against the exposed position of Thoburn's division, as McInturff's and Bowman's fords, directly in his front, were alike unguarded.[1]

Having been summoned to Washington, Sheridan had left the army on the 15th of October and the command had devolved upon General H. G. Wright of the Sixth corps, the next senior officer. On the following day (October 16th), the latter forwarded to Sheridan, then at Front Royal en route to the National Capital, an intercepted Confederate despatch indicating the possibility of an attack. Upon the receipt of this despatch, Sheridan at once sent Wright the following telegraphic orders: "*Close in Colonel Powell. . . . Look well to your ground and be well prepared.*" [2]

[1] The North Fork of the Shenandoah could readily be crossed by these fords, one of which was just below the mouth of Cedar Creek and the other about one-half mile farther down the stream.

[2] *Personal Memoirs* of P. H. Sheridan, Vol. II, p. 64. (The *italics* are the author's.)

The only step taken by Wright towards carrying out Sheridan's specific instructions consisted in the transfer, on the 17th, of one of Powell's cavalry brigades under Colonel A. S. Moore from Front Royal to Buckton's ford across the North Fork of the Shenandoah,[1] an entirely detached position some four miles from Crook's left. Moore was instructed to watch Bowman's and McInturff's fords and to connect his vedettes with the pickets of Crook's infantry. It will be perceived, however, that Wright's disposition of Moore's troops was of very little practical value in protecting the Union left from surprise, as Moore's vedettes, if attacked, would not have given warning of the enemy's approach, inasmuch as in falling back upon their own brigade they would have taken the precise direction which led them *away* from Crook's command. Had Moore been posted either at McInturff's or at Bowman's ford (where the Confederates crossed when they surprised the Union army very early in the morning of the 19th), he would at least have been able to give the alarm.

Wright seems to have equally disregarded Sheridan's further instructions, though they were of a more general character. No extra precautions were taken, while those previously observed were permitted to lapse and for some unaccountable reason the Union troops were not ordered to stand to arms at two o'clock on the morning of the battle, as had been the case for several days previously.

There seems to have been a singular obsession in Wright's mind so far as the right or westerly flank of the Union army was concerned, although this was well refused

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part II, p. 432-433.

and a surprise practically impossible as the country was open. Under date of the 16th of October, he reported to Sheridan as follows: "I shall only fear an attack on my right which I shall make every preparation for guarding against and resisting."[1]

It is perfectly obvious that Sheridan's orders, if scrupulously carried out, would have entirely prevented the disaster of the 19th of October. With an effective contact between Crook's corps and Powell's cavalry division, and with the Union forces under arms at two o'clock on the morning of the battle, a surprise would have been impossible as both Crook and Powell would have been prepared to meet the enemy had Early made an attack—which in all likelihood he would not have risked under the changed conditions.

In his account of the disaster which befell Crook's corps, as given in his "Memoirs," Sheridan refers with surprising leniency to Wright's failure to obey his positive instructions,[2] and then passes as follows from the consideration of actual facts to a purely hypothetical discussion: "The surprise of the morning might have befallen me as well as the general on whom it did descend, and though it is possible that this could have been precluded had Powell's cavalry been closed in, as suggested in my despatch from

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 51.

[2] Sheridan's attitude in this instance was in marked contrast with the position he took with respect to Torbert who failed to carry out the former's instructions to force his way down the Luray valley with J. H. Wilson's division and two of Merritt's brigades so as to cut off Early's retreat, Sheridan's statement being as follows: "Torbert ought to have made a fight. Had he been defeated in this, his withdrawal then to await the result at Fisher's Hill would have been justified, but it does not appear that he made any serious effort at all to dislodge the Confederate cavalry." (*Personal Memoirs* of P. H. Sheridan, Vol. II, p. 42.)

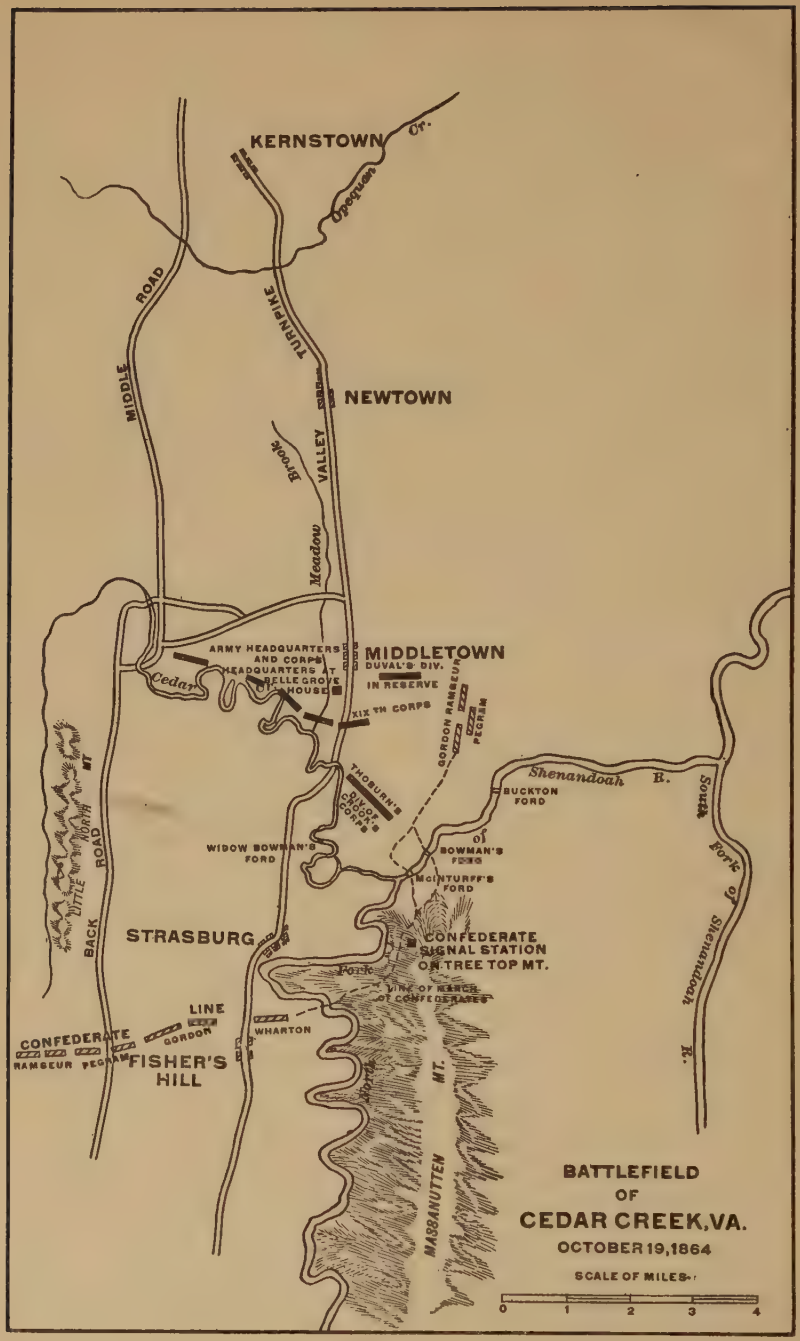
Front Royal, yet the enemy's desperation might have prompted some other cleverer and ingenious scheme for relieving his fallen fortunes in the Shenandoah Valley." [1]

As a rule, any military disaster due to a successful surprise is instinctively associated with the impression (usually correct) that the leadership or discipline of the organization caught napping must have been more or less unsatisfactory; but it is to be remembered that the infantry of Crook's corps had taken a most prominent and distinguished part in the two general engagements of the preceding month, as acknowledged by Sheridan himself in his telegram to Grant of September 23, 1864, which read as follows: "The good conduct of his (Crook's) command turned the tide of battle in our favor at Winchester and Fisher's Hill." [2] In the matter of the surprise with which we are dealing it can hardly be disputed that upon the commander-in-chief rested the responsibility of placing his troops in safe and secure positions, and that so far as Crook's personal accountability was concerned, he was not at liberty to make any changes in the disposition of his troops, which had been definitely prescribed by Sheridan himself with special reference to the ground to be occupied by the Nineteenth corps. Further, Crook's protest against the exposed position of Thoburn's division was not given the attention that it should have received.

[1] *Personal Memoirs* of P. H. Sheridan, Vol. II, p. 96.
[2] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part II, p. 163.

CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLE OF CEDAR CREEK


KERNSTOWN
Opequon Cr.
TURNPIKE
MIDDLE ROAD
NEWTOWN
Brook
VALLEY
Meadow
MIDDLETOWN
DUVAL'S DIV. IN RESERVE
ARMY HEADQUARTERS AND CORPS HEADQUARTERS AT BELLE GROVE HOUSE
Cedar
XIX TH CORPS
GORDON RAMSEUR PEGRAM
THOBURN'S DIVISION
CRUMP'S CREEK
Shenandoah R.
BUCKTON FORD
BOWMAN'S FORD
McINTURFF'S FORD
WIDOW BOWMAN'S FORD
LITTLE NORTH MT.
BACK ROAD
STRASBURG
CONFEDERATE SIGNAL STATION ON TREE TOP MT.
Fork
LINE OF MARCH OF CONFEDERATES
South Fork of Shenandoah R.
LINE
GORDON
WHARTON
CONFEDERATE
RAMSEUR PEGRAM
FISHER'S HILL
NORTH MT.
MASSANUTTEN MT.
BATTLEFIELD OF CEDAR CREEK, VA.
OCTOBER 19, 1864
SCALE OF MILES
0 1 2 3 4

CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLE OF CEDAR CREEK

THE very remarkable conflict between the Union and Confederate armies, known as the battle of Cedar Creek, began before daybreak on the morning of October 19, 1864, when the Confederates surprised and defeated the Union army, which fell back beyond Middletown after very severe fighting. The enemy's offensive having ceased about noon, the Union troops attacked in their turn, between 3:30 and 4:00 P. M., and drove the Confederates from the field in complete rout and with losses far exceeding those which they had inflicted upon Sheridan's forces in the morning.

As stated in my account of the battle of Fisher's Hill, the Massanutten range constituted an almost complete military barrier between the Main and Luray valleys. It was discovered by the Confederates, however, that though extremely difficult it was possible for infantry to pass in single file between the water's edge and the almost perpendicular sides of Three Top Mountain. In addition to this, the Confederates could plainly discern from their signal station on that mountain, that both McInturff's and Bowman's fords, which communicated with the Luray valley, were practically undefended.

With these data in hand, Early proceeded to formulate a

plan of attack which was conceived and executed with very great ability. It consisted of the transfer of Gordon's, Ramseur's and Pegram's divisions along the base of Three Top Mountain from the Main to the Luray valley, whence they could readily cross the Shenandoah at either of the above named fords and turn the Union left, and of a simultaneous frontal attack upon Crook's position by Kershaw's division, while Early's remaining division under Wharton was held in reserve ready to cross Cedar Creek at the turnpike bridge and ford, in conjunction with the Confederate artillery, as soon as the movement had sufficiently developed. Early placed Gordon in command of the turning movement, which was carried out with the utmost precision and in full cooperation with Kershaw's frontal attack upon Crook's entrenchments.

During the days which preceded the battle, I could not help feeling great solicitude in regard to my two batteries which were entrenched on the high ridge east of the turnpike, as it seemed to me that our left flank was very inadequately protected. My anxiety was all the more keen because I realized that if our left were turned it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to withdraw the pieces. Upon discussing this matter with others, the invariable reply was that our left was protected by Powell's cavalry division, which was not at all satisfactory to me as nobody seemed to be informed as to its exact position: I even went so far as to ride out beyond our left to try to locate it but returned after going some distance and seeing nothing.

On the night before the battle my batteries were posted as follows:—B, Fifth United States Artillery (six 3-inch

rifled guns), First Lieutenant Henry F. Brewerton commanding, and D, First Pennsylvania Artillery (six 10-pounder Parrott guns), First Lieutenant William Munk commanding, behind entrenchments on the high and narrow ridge heretofore described, the caissons, horses and trains of the two batteries being in a narrow ravine between this ridge and a second parallel ridge which, until it begins to fall away towards the turnpike, wholly dominates the first. The two units just named were some 400 yards apart, the Pennsylvania battery on the left, while Battery L, First Ohio Artillery (four 12-pounder Napoleon guns), Captain F. C. Gibbs commanding, occupied a small field-work on the extreme right and lower part of this second ridge where it extends beyond the first and which covered the Cedar Creek ford and bridge. The headquarters of the artillery brigade were in the temporary camp of Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery (the Regular battery of which I was the captain) and in the ravine just referred to.

Such was the general state of affairs in my command when the Confederate attack began between 4:30 and 5:00 A. M. on the 19th of October, 1864. I was aroused by some distant firing on our extreme right which was caused by Rosser's demonstration on the Back Road, and a few minutes later there were some scattered shots along our front. Not being yet fully awake, my first impression was that our pickets were chopping wood to make fires, the night being quite cool, but as the firing did not cease I jumped up, put on my clothes, ordered my horse, called the chief bugler and directed him to sound the "reveille,"

which, repeated at the different battery camps, turned the men out for roll call. My first impulse was to have "boots and saddles" sounded—which would have meant that horses were to be harnessed and batteries made ready for immediate action; but upon reflecting that under orders from Army Headquarters we had stood to arms at 2:00 A. M. for three or four nights previously, and that no such instructions had been given for the past night (presumably for some good reason), I concluded that "boots and saddles" might needlessly alarm our infantry; and then, too, a surprise seemed unlikely, as it was generally known that a brigade of the Nineteenth corps was ordered to make a reconnaissance in force at daybreak to feel the enemy.

Although it did not occur to me that we were going into immediate battle, I felt some anxiety while standing in front of my tent waiting for my horse which was promptly brought by Private Charles Tucker (who was taken prisoner and afterwards died in captivity at Salisbury, North Carolina). No particular mount having been designated, he brought my grey mare, almost white, which, needless to say, on account of her conspicuous color, would not have been ridden from choice during a general engagement.

As the men of Light Battery B were answering to their names at the reveille roll call, a tremendous sound of volley firing suddenly burst forth at the entrenchments on the heights above. I immediately sprang upon the horse and galloped in that direction, calling to Tucker, "Go into the tent and bring my sabre" (this being the last I ever saw of either Tucker or the sabre) but not forgetting to order First Sergeant Webb (who commanded the portion of the

battery in the ravine) to harness and hitch as rapidly as possible.

The Confederates' frontal attack on Crook's entrenched line was made, as planned, by Kershaw's division which advanced in absolute silence to the Widow Bowman's ford across Cedar Creek. A specially selected detachment dashed through the water and, favored by the darkness and thick fog, captured nearly all of the Union soldiers who were picketing the ford. Once across the stream, Kershaw pushed forward to the attack without throwing out skirmishers, and soon took possession of Thoburn's entrenched line which had been already turned on its extreme left by Gordon's column.

Upon reaching the position of the Regular battery, I found that Thoburn's men were falling back in the greatest confusion, which was not at all surprising as the majority of them had been aroused from profound slumber by the Confederate attack. No troops, under the circumstances, could have offered any effective resistance, but everything possible seems to have been done. In his "History of Kershaw's Brigade," Dickert says: "As we emerged from a thicket into the open we could see the enemy in great commotion, but soon the works were filled with half-dressed troops and they opened a galling fire upon us. . . . This did not continue long, for all down the line (Thoburn's) from our extreme right (Union left) the line gave way." [1] This, as just stated, was due to the fact that Gordon had turned Thoburn's entrenchments which were promptly occupied by the enemy who fired into the tents in rear, some

[1] *History of Kershaw's Brigade,* by Captain D. A. Dickert, pp. 447-8.

of our men being made prisoners while still wrapped in their blankets.

The guns of the Pennsylvania battery were all captured after a desperate resistance on the part of Lieutenant Boyle (who was wounded) and his cannoneers, a number of whom were bayoneted or struck down with clubbed muskets at their pieces, the sounds of the conflict being plainly audible for quite a distance. Though not as yet directly attacked, the situation at the Regular battery is thus described in a communication to the War Department by Lieutenant (afterwards Lieutenant-Colonel) Brewerton: "We were under a withering musketry fire, and as Colonel du Pont was the only mounted man on this part of the field and was riding a grey horse which made him very conspicuous, I expected to see him fall at every instant." So far as my own personal feelings were concerned, I did not even realize that we were under fire, as my sole and undivided thought was concentrated upon the problem of saving the guns.

Brewerton having reported that his pieces were loaded with canister but that no enemy could be seen on account of the fog, I directed him to open fire, deeming it very important that everyone should understand that a general engagement had begun. To Brewerton's inquiry, "At what shall I fire," I replied, "Fire to the left in the direction of the sound," and he opened at once with his two center pieces, these being the first cannon shots fired at the battle of Cedar Creek.

As the guns of Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery, were in imminent danger of capture, I directed

Brewerton to hold his ground until he could see the forms of the enemy approaching through the dense fog which hung over the battlefield and then to run the pieces down the hill by hand, abandoning the limbers, telling him that I would go back and have the caisson limbers sent to the bottom of the hill to receive the guns. Again repeating the order to Brewerton so as to ascertain that he clearly understood it, I galloped down the hill to the camp of Light Battery B, being joined en route by my other orderly, Bugler Richard Wende of that battery, the most faithful and devoted of soldiers.

Although there was not a single commissioned officer in the ravine on duty with the battery, the drivers, in spite of a very heavy fire, were making extraordinary efforts to harness and hitch their horses with the greatest possible despatch. Everyone displayed the utmost calmness and courage and there was not the slightest disorder or confusion. First Sergeant Webb was in command and was loyally assisted by Quartermaster Sergeant Sauthoff, Stable Sergeant Rogers and all the other non-commissioned officers of the battery. I have never seen a more striking illustration of the discipline and devotion of the patriotic soldiers of our Regular Army than was afforded on that day by the enlisted men of Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery. Their coolness, steadiness and unflinching bravery could not have been excelled, and they are fully entitled to the highest tributes of praise for their admirable conduct throughout the battle and particularly at its very beginning when largely by their exertions the battery was

extricated while almost within the enemy's grasp and the greater part of its matériel saved.

After ordering Sergeant Webb to unlimber the caissons and take their limbers to the foot of the hill to be attached to the pieces which were coming down by hand, I lost no time in going to the camp of the Pennsylvania battery, a short distance to the east, and directed Lieutenant Munk to get out as quickly as possible with all his belongings, as otherwise capture was inevitable. Thence I went as fast as my horse could carry me to the Ohio battery and at once ordered Captain Gibbs to send to the rear his battery wagon, forge, train and caissons (one of the last named being captured after the horses had been shot down) and to open immediately with two of his pieces upon the skirmish line of Wharton's Confederate division which was on the other side of the Creek, firing as it advanced and rapidly approaching the bridge and ford. The fire of the Ohio battery, however, aimed at the flashes of the enemy's muskets (as it was still dark) was very accurate and to my inexpressible relief the hostile skirmish line ceased to advance. No less a person than General Early himself, who was on the spot, has explained why the Confederate skirmish line was halted, his statement being as follows: "The enemy" (Gibbs's battery) "who still held the work on the turnpike commanding that road and the bridge, opened with artillery on us. Our artillery was immediately brought into action and opened on the enemy who soon evacuated the work and our men from the other columns rushed into it."[1]

[1] *Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War between the States*, by General Jubal A. Early, p. 443.

This conclusively shows that the fire of Gibbs's pieces upon Wharton's men, as ordered by me, arrested the Confederate advance until their artillery could be brought forward and put in position to reply, and that the delay thus occasioned prevented the capture not only of Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery, but of a great many officers and men of Thoburn's infantry division as well as of my own artillery brigade. Had the enemy disregarded the fire of the Ohio battery, as he should have done, and boldly pushed his skirmish line across the stream, the retreat of the Regular battery would have been cut off together with that of large numbers of Union officers and men.

At the same time that Gibbs received orders to open fire with one of his platoons, I directed him to send his other to take position some four or five hundred yards to his left and rear on a more elevated portion of the ridge, the outline of which was just discernible through the fog, my idea being that if a battle was to be fought on that particular ground, it was most important that the ridge should be held until the Nineteenth corps could come to our assistance. The platoon, however, under Lieutenant Guthrie, upon reaching the position indicated had to return at all speed, having found itself almost face to face with Gordon's advancing Confederate lines. While it was evident from the first that the enemy was operating against our left flank, we had not realized, until Guthrie got back, the extensive scale upon which the Confederate turning movement was being carried out nor the vigor with which it was being pressed.

As the enemy was fast approaching, I withdrew the Ohio

battery from the fieldwork and moved it up the turnpike, the Confederate soldiers entering the work just as the last piece was leaving. Except during the few minutes I was with General Crook and staff, I constantly remained with the Ohio battery until noon—and, indeed, up to that time it was the only part of my artillery command which was ready for combat. This did not afford Gibbs, who was an excellent soldier, much opportunity for the exercise of individual judgment, but all my orders of course were transmitted through him.

I now go back to Brewerton, who turned his guns upon our entrenchments on his left, then in possession of the enemy, and continued firing until the Confederates were within twenty-five yards of the battery, when, pursuant to my directions, he ran his guns by hand down the hill to the caisson limbers waiting there to receive them. Unfortunately he lost his second piece which became entangled in some bushes, but before abandoning the gun it was spiked and, being unfit for service, was taken so far to the rear by the enemy that, to my infinite chagrin, it was the only piece that was not recaptured at the close of the battle.

In extricating the guns of Light Battery B, Lieutenant Brewerton was taken prisoner at the rear of the column, while Second Lieutenant Samuel David Southworth, Second United States Artillery, attached to the battery, the only other commissioned officer present, was killed. The last named, upon my recommendation, had been promoted only a short time previously to a second lieutenancy in the Regular Army. He was an exceptionally

handsome and promising young man as well as a splendid soldier, who had been for more than a year the first sergeant of my battery and had commanded a platoon at the battle of Newmarket, where he did excellent service.

At this juncture, the positions which the batteries had held on the high and narrow ridge near Cedar Creek were occupied by Kershaw's men, while Gordon's infantry were in possession of the higher ridge to the north which farther back unites with the first. These ridges may be likened to a gigantic human thumb and forefinger and the narrow ravine to the space or opening between them from which our people were making superhuman efforts to escape. Fortunately for my artillery brigade, the Confederates halted for a certain time to re-form their lines and contented themselves with pouring a heavy musketry fire into the dense fog which hung over the ravine as well as with opening with canister from the captured guns of the Pennsylvania battery. General Early states that this halt was indispensable as the Confederate ranks, in passing over the rough ground in the early morning, "had been much disordered and the men scattered and it had required time to re-form them." [1]

As the enemy practically surrounded the narrow ravine, the escape of any of the Union troops seemed absolutely miraculous: nevertheless, five pieces of Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery, with its battery wagon, forge and wagon train, moved out to the west and reached the turnpike in safety. Though under a heavy fire for

[1] *Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War between the States,* by General Jubal A. Early, pp. 447-8.

more than a mile they all escaped with the exception of the battery wagon, the horses of which were shot down. In addition, three caissons of Battery D, First Pennsylvania Artillery, as well as a large number of fugitives belonging to Thoburn's infantry division managed to get away, but two of my own staff officers who tarried too long in their tent, Surgeon Knight and the Quartermaster, Captain Gillis, were made prisoners.

While on the turnpike with Gibbs's battery and previous to the arrival of General Crook, I noticed with amazement and, I fear also, with sundry imprecations, that there seemed to be no indication of any change of front, to meet Gordon, on the part of the Nineteenth corps troops a few hundred yards to the west, and that some of them seemed to be still facing in a southerly direction and awaiting instructions. I could not understand this, as a brigade of Grover's division, under orders to make the reconnaissance in force at daybreak, was in complete readiness and could have been immediately formed in line and placed in position to confront the Confederates who had turned our left flank. It appears, however, from the official report of the commander of the brigade in question,[1] that he "had immediately ordered my (his) command into the rifle pits," which was the very thing he should not have done, as these had been constructed to dispute hostile movements from the south.

Our corps commander, General Crook, having now arrived, I reported to him with Gibbs's battery and a line was formed near the turnpike and facing east. The

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 333.

battery at once opened fire, having on its flanks Kitching's regiment of New York heavy artillery which had only reached the army on the previous evening as an escort to a wagon train, and, so far as my memory serves me, the only other troops in our immediate vicinity was a solitary regiment of the Nineteenth corps. General Wright, however, as shown by his official report,[1] was close at hand and making every possible effort to retard the advance of Gordon's turning columns, but I have no recollection of having seen him, probably on account of the thick pall of smoke and fog which enveloped the field and because I was very much engrossed in superintending the fire of Gibbs's battery. We were under a tremendous musketry fire from the advancing Confederates and had many casualties, among them Colonel Kitching, who was mortally wounded. The losses would have been much greater had not the enemy, who were above us, aimed too high so that most of their bullets passed over our heads.

The Union infantry in the line just formed seemed much demoralized, breaking and falling back before they came in actual contact with the enemy, but entire coolness and order prevailed in the Ohio battery which was hastily moved to the rear to avoid capture. I placed it some 800 yards farther north on the turnpike near some infantry belonging to the Sixth corps and it promptly reopened fire, but when these troops fell back I was compelled to move it once more and put it in position north of Middletown. We were still under a very heavy musketry fire and Bugler Wende, riding just behind me on the turnpike, had his

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, pp. 158-9.

forage cap shot off his head by a Confederate bullet, whereupon he coolly got off his horse, picked up the cap which the impact of the projectile had carried a number of yards to the rear, and replaced it on his head.

As the enemy at that time did not seem to be advancing in much force on the turnpike, about 9:00 A. M. I joined General Crook and the corps staff who were sheltered by some trees behind our line of battle to the west of that highway. The enemy's bullets constantly whistled past our heads and everyone was greatly depressed by the disaster which had befallen our corps, the only unit belonging to it which was practically intact being Battery L, First Ohio Artillery, and that had lost one caisson. The fog had now disappeared and the burning rays of an autumn sun lighted up the battlefield and caused much physical exhaustion to the many who like myself had not tasted food or drink since the previous sunset.

After some ten or fifteen minutes, I said to General Crook: "Gibbs's battery is fit for service; will you permit me to take it into action on the turnpike, as I think the enemy will move in that direction?" He replied, "I can give you no support," to which I answered that I did not need any support, as there was a body of our cavalry there. Having received the desired permission, I went back to the battery and put it in position near the turnpike to the north of Middletown, where it opened fire with marked effect upon some Confederate infantry who were advancing under cover of the buildings. The officer there in command of the cavalry, who belonged to the New York Mounted Rifles, said to me, "You are going to have those

guns captured." I replied, "No, I shall not unless you desert me"; and later General Charles Devens gave me a squadron of cavalry to support the battery which, as our troops fell back, moved north on the turnpike by echelons of platoons and continued to fire until the retrograde movement ceased. Here, to my intense joy, I was joined by the five guns of my Regular battery, entirely refitted except as to caissons and ready for action, which increased my force to nine guns, and with them came Second Lieutenant Charles Holman, Fifth United States Artillery, who reported for duty.

As both the Nineteenth and Crook's corps had been for the moment practically crushed, the Union defence at that time devolved upon the Sixth corps which had crossed Meadow Brook and taken position nearer the turnpike—upon the two cavalry divisions—and, to be exact, upon the nine remaining guns of Crook's artillery brigade, consisting of Du Pont's Regular battery of five guns, and Gibbs's Ohio battery of four guns. The First and Third Divisions of the Sixth corps, in line parallel to the turnpike, were most vigorously attacked by Gordon and Kershaw, only retiring after a very stubborn resistance when their flanks were turned. This left the Second division of the corps under General George W. Getty, which was at some little distance from the others, as the only resisting Union organization on the field save the two cavalry divisions and the two batteries of Crook's corps. Getty was a splendid soldier whom I knew personally very well as he belonged to my Regular regiment: accepting the responsibility which now devolved upon him, he recrossed Meadow Brook with his division

and placed it in a strongly defensive position upon a partially wooded eminence on the other side of that little stream, where he was soon attacked by the Confederate divisions of Ramseur and Pegram. Getty prohibited any firing until the enemy had advanced within thirty yards, when his men opened with terrible effect, his assailants breaking and falling back in much disorder. After a few minutes spent in reforming their ranks, another charge was made with a similar result, whereupon Early, who was present, ordered Wharton with his division to their assistance, when a third unsuccessful onslaught was made, directed in part against Getty's right.[1] After having held three of Early's divisions in check for about two hours, Getty was threatened by a turning movement and compelled to fall back, which he did in excellent order, taking a new position half a mile west of Middletown. Finding the ground, however, not very defensible he again fell back (and for the last time) to a cross-road intersecting the turnpike, the Confederates following.

As heretofore mentioned, I told General Crook that in my judgment the enemy would advance by the turnpike, my opinion being based upon the fact that it was the obvious thing for him to do. General Gordon and other Confederate leaders have severely criticized Early for not having more promptly pressed the original attack, a course to which he was certainly committed in theory, as shown by his instructions to the Confederate division commanders on the day before the battle and which are given in great

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, pp. 194-5.

detail in his "Narrative of the War between the States." [1] His fatal error, however, did not lie in the lack of energy in pushing the attack but in the faulty direction which he gave to his advancing troops. Had he moved directly up the turnpike with the bulk of his infantry and all of his artillery, leaving one division to face the Sixth corps troops still in line and another to protect his flanks from cavalry attacks, he would have been able to turn, or at least to threaten, the left of the Sixth corps which would have been compelled to move to the rear. The Confederates, moreover, would have had the advantage of being able to march on the turnpike, while the opposing Union troops would have been forced to fall back across country, making it very difficult for them to retire in absolute good order, especially when their flank was being continually menaced, and under such conditions it seems exceedingly doubtful whether a dozen Sheridans could have arrested the retrograde movement of the Union troops until Winchester was reached. In failing to push vigorously up the turnpike, Early may have been influenced in part by the great respect he seems to have entertained for the Federal cavalry as shown by his own statements. Be this as it may, the battle in any event was lost to the Confederates from the moment that Wharton was ordered to support Ramseur and Pegram in their assault upon Getty's division, not only for the reason that it then and there became apparent that the morale of Getty's troops was still unimpaired and that his men could not be driven an inch further by frontal attacks, but also because

[1] *Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War between the States*, by General Jubal A. Early, p. 442.

the very heavy casualties in the three hostile divisions seem to have made Early much more circumspect.

The Confederate offensive ceased about noon, Early stating that "it was now apparent that it would not do to press my troops further. They had been up all night and were much jaded." [1] The Confederate soldiers were undoubtedly very tired and although the temporary suspension of hostilities gave them a much-needed rest, it was of even greater value to the Union army, as an opportunity was thus afforded to realign and reform its scattered units.

In explaining the cessation of his advance, Early made the further assertion that one of the causes of the defeat of the Confederates at Cedar Creek was "the partial demoralization caused by the plunder of the enemy's camps." [2] General John B. Gordon, of Georgia, however, who, as we have seen, successfully carried out the Confederate turning movement in that battle, has devoted some ten pages of his "Reminiscences of the Civil War" [3] to a most fervid denial of the accuracy of this statement. In spite of Gordon's contradictions, it would seem, however, that Early's assertion was largely correct, as we shall proceed to show.

George Haven Putnam of New York City, an absolutely reliable witness, who, as an officer of the Nineteenth corps, was captured by the enemy at Cedar Creek, says in his "Memories of My Youth": "Within a very few minutes

[1] *Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War between the States*, by General Jubal A. Early, p. 447.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 451.
[3] *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, by General John B. Gordon, pp. 363-372.

after the cessation of the fire, the second line of the enemy ran over us. We were promptly disarmed, and were relieved not only of weapons but of certain portions of our equipment which it was thought we could spare and which were doubtless needed, such as overcoats, rubber blankets, and contents of our pockets, particularly greenbacks. . . . The officers in charge of the business ordered the 'Yankees' to kick off their shoes, and these were promptly appropriated by the Confederate soldiers of equivalent size. In certain cases the battered and largely worn-out shoes of the 'Rebs' were thrown over in place of the articles appropriated." [1]

In corroboration of Putnam's narrative, we have the testimony of another entirely credible witness, Lieutenant (afterwards Lieutenant-Colonel) Brewerton of the Regular Army, who was taken prisoner in the same battle. I have frequently heard him relate the following incident and name the Confederate officer to whom he referred, who came from Gordon's own state: "Soon after my capture, a soldier of the enemy's provost guard pulled off my boots at the direction of a Confederate officer who, after trying them on, returned them as too small! By a singular coincidence, I had known this officer very well in my boyhood and recognized him instantly, while, as is not surprising, he had not the faintest suspicion of my identity."

Finally, I quote the following from Dickert's "History of Kershaw's Brigade," which is written from a Confederate standpoint: "I looked in the rear. What a sight! Here came stragglers, who looked like half the army,

[1] *Memories of My Youth,* by George Haven Putnam, pp. 373-4.

laden with every imaginable kind of plunder—some with an eye to comfort, had loaded themselves with new tent cloths, nice blankets, overcoats, or pants, while others, who looked more to actual gain in dollars and cents, had invaded the sutler's tents and were fairly laden down with such articles as they could find readiest sale for. I saw one man with a stack of wool hats on his head, one pressed in the other, until it reached more than an arm's length above his head. Such a planned battle! Such a complete success! Such a total rout of the enemy! All to be lost either by a fatal blunder or the greed of the soldier for spoils. Only a small per cent, comparatively, was engaged in the plundering, but enough to weaken our ranks." [1]

On his return journey from Washington, General Sheridan spent the night before the battle at Winchester. Aroused by the cannonading early in the morning of the 19th, he pushed forward as rapidly as possible to join his command, reaching the battlefield about 10:30 A. M., though his arrival was not generally known for nearly an hour later. A perusal of his Memoirs will show that, contrary to popular belief, there was nothing spectacular in his movements after leaving Winchester. Having resumed command, he very properly proceeded at once to inform himself as to the exact condition of his army and, as a preliminary to taking the offensive, decided to post his troops on the line which Getty's division and the cavalry were then holding. His new disposition of the Union forces was as follows—the Nineteenth corps on the right; the

[1] *History of Kershaw's Brigade,* by Captain D. A. Dickert, p. 449. (Newberry, South Carolina, 1899.)

Sixth in the center with its left very near the turnpike; then the two remaining batteries of my artillery brigade (sole representatives of Crook's corps), and on the left the First and Third cavalry divisions, including Moore's brigade of the Second cavalry division whch had been drawn in from Buckton's ford. After the troops had been fully formed and realigned, Sheridan rode along the whole front and was most enthusiastically greeted.

When the Union forces advanced, between 3:30 and 4:00 P. M., my Regular battery was in line on the easterly or left side of the Valley turnpike, with the Ohio battery on its right and astride of that highway. We soon opened fire and became very warmly engaged, but when the ammunition of the Regular battery began to run short on account of the loss of its caissons, I had the remaining supply packed in the limbers of two of the pieces and sent the other three guns to the ammunition train in our rear to refill their limber chests. I then moved forward the Ohio battery and the two remaining guns of the Regular battery and put the six pieces in position a short distance north of Middletown, where I was able to get an enfilading fire upon a battery of the enemy and a portion of his infantry line which were making a determined resistance at a clump of woods on the west side of the turnpike. Some very effective firing was done with solid shot from Gibbs's 12-pounder guns and with percussion shells from the rifled pieces of Light Battery B, Fifth United States Artillery.

The enemy finally gave way in great confusion and, having been rejoined by the three other pieces of the Regular battery with a fresh supply of ammunition, I

moved down the turnpike as rapidly as possible with my nine guns, first at a trot and then at a gallop, until my two batteries reached the high ground near Cedar Creek on the west side of that highway. From this position we overlooked the completely disorganized Confederate army in full retreat, the nearest of the fugitives being about 600 yards from our guns. I immediately opened fire—the five rifled guns directing their shots towards the head of the column and the four 12-pounders further to the rear. Our shooting was very accurate and almost every shell exploded directly in the midst of the crowded masses before us. After a very few rounds, evidence of complete demoralization could be plainly discerned—field-pieces and caissons, wagons and ambulances, were abandoned by their drivers and dashed along the road in wild confusion, damaging or destroying each other by collisions, while swarms of the retreating enemy left the road and scattered through the fields. I gave the order to cease firing as soon as the Union cavalry had advanced far enough to be endangered by our projectiles, when our mounted troops promptly captured everything in sight.

The effective character of the fire of my two batteries upon the retreating enemy was fully confirmed by an eye-witness of all that occurred—Surgeon Knight of my artillery brigade, who made a very detailed verbal report to me on the following day. As previously stated, Knight was captured in his tent very early in the morning, but instead of being sent to the rear with the other prisoners, was retained on the battlefield to assist the Confederate surgeons in caring for the wounded. When the enemy

gave way towards the close of the day, he accompanied as a prisoner Early's retreating troops, and, as it happened, was trudging along in close proximity to the ambulance in which the wounded Confederate General, Stephen D. Ramseur, was being conveyed to the rear. As the Union cavalry drew nigh and the capture of the ambulance became a question of only a few moments, Major Hutchinson of Ramseur's staff, seeing a Union officer close at hand and realizing that their respective rôles were about to be reversed, accosted the quondam prisoner as follows: "We surrender to you, sir!" Knight, who took in the situation, received the surrender of the wounded general with his two staff officers and two orderlies, and ordered the ambulance to be turned to the rear. When our troopers came up he claimed his five prisoners and personally conducted them to our corps headquarters at the Belle Grove house.

As soon as my nine pieces opened, as above mentioned, they were under a persistent and very accurate fire from Bryan's Confederate battery which was covering Early's retreat, and a number of casualties occurred, among others Captain Gibbs of the Ohio battery, who was severely wounded in the foot by the very last shot the enemy fired, which was aimed by Prof. Milton W. Humphreys of the University of Virginia, at that time sergeant of Bryan's battery and in charge of the guns which were covering Early's retreat. I did not permit my guns to pay any attention to the hostile artillery but ordered their fire to be concentrated upon the retreating masses of the Confederates, which was our true objective.

Night had now fallen and the battle was over, the next task being to provide food and water for my exhausted men and horses. Fortunately the trains of both batteries had escaped, so that it was comparatively easy to provide for their wants, and after the remaining men and horses had been cared for, the whole command slept on the ground for the night.

At this juncture I suddenly realized that I was almost completely worn out mentally and physically; that I had not tasted food for more than twenty-four hours; that I had been almost continuously in the saddle since the Confederates attacked us between 4:30 and 5:00 o'clock in the morning; and, worst of all, that I had no abiding place, as my personal effects had been taken by the enemy when our camp was captured at dawn. The only recourse was to seek food and shelter at the headquarters of my corps which were with Army Headquarters at the Belle Grove house. Upon arriving there, one of the first persons I met was General Torbert of Delaware, commander of our cavalry corps, who lost no time in telling me that General Ramseur was mortally wounded and lying in the house, which information so acutely shocked and distressed me that I forgot for the time my own necessities and hastened upstairs to see him.

Ramseur and I had been on terms of most friendly intimacy during the four years we served together at West Point, and although his own surgeon and adjutant-general were present, he turned to me in his suffering and never relinquished his grasp of my hand until the anæsthetic given to relieve his agony had rendered him unconscious,

which condition continued until the end came.[1] My eventful day closed with this tragic incident, and having procured some food I slept profoundly until the following morning.

It is impossible to speak too highly of the admirable courage displayed throughout the whole engagement by the officers and enlisted men of the artillery brigade of Crook's corps under my command. Out of the twelve commissioned officers present at the opening of the battle, six were either killed, wounded or taken prisoners, and the heavy casualties in the Pennsylvania battery were due to the bravery and determination with which Lieutenant James Boyle and the cannoneers of that battery stuck by their guns to the very last moment. The Regular and the Ohio battery were under my immediate personal command throughout the entire day and the splendid coolness and bravery of the officers and enlisted men of both units were beyond all praise.

The battle of Cedar Creek was by far the most momentous episode of my whole military career. At General Sheridan's personal request Crook had established his headquarters at the Belle Grove house where the Army Headquarters were located and was thus at a considerable distance from his own corps at the time of our surprise by the enemy in the early morning. As his chief of artillery, it was my fortune to be most suddenly and unexpectedly

[1] Stephen Dodson Ramseur, born in North Carolina in 1837. After graduating from the United States Military Academy in 1860 and serving for a short time in the Regular Army, he joined the Confederate service in which he became a major-general. (For a more detailed account of his last moments, see the published address by the author made on the Cedar Creek battlefield, September 16, 1920, at the unveiling of the Ramseur monument.)

called upon to act wholly upon my own responsibility as well as to make the instant decisions which, as we have seen, temporarily delayed the advance not only of Wharton's Confederate division but of the whole Confederate artillery at the very moment when both were most needed by the enemy. The time thus gained prevented the capture of a large number of officers and men of my artillery brigade as well as of Thoburn's infantry division: it also saved the five guns of my Regular battery, which were actively used against the Confederates later in the day, and of three caissons of the Pennsylvania battery, together with the wagon trains of the Regular and Ohio batteries, and of a large number of artillery horses and matériel of every description.

I was only a few months over twenty-six at the time—an age which from my present viewpoint seems very youthful, but which I was far from considering as such in 1864. It was a very great satisfaction to know that all the measures I had taken met with General Crook's entire approbation, and he stated in his official report of the battle that "Captain du Pont, Chief of Artillery, and the officers and men of his batteries are deserving of particular mention for their conspicuous gallantry and the valuable services rendered that day." [1] I received the commission of Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel in the Regular Army for "distinguished services at the battle of Cedar Creek," and was awarded later the Congressional Medal of Honor for the part I took in the same battle, the War Department officially stating that "Under the provision of the Act of

[1] O. R. Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, p. 366.

Congress approved March 3, 1863, providing for the presentation of medals of honor to such officers, non-commissioned officers and privates as have most distinguished themselves in action, a Congressional Medal of Honor has been presented to you for most distinguished gallantry in action, the following being a statement of the particular service: 'At Cedar Creek, Va., October 19, 1864, this officer, then Captain Fifth United States Artillery and Chief of Artillery, Army of West Virginia, by his brave bearing, most distinguished gallantry and voluntary exposure to the enemy's fire at a critical moment when the Union line had been broken and defeated, encouraged his men to stand to their guns, checked the advance of the enemy and brought off most of his pieces. In the later victorious advance of the army, the same day, he also rendered valuable service and was particularly mentioned in the official report of Major-General Crook.' "

So far as the Valley of Virginia was concerned, the battle of Cedar Creek virtually ended the eventful campaign of 1864 and upon the dissolution of the Army of West Virginia, I continued to command my own battery (B, Fifth United States Artillery), at Kernstown, Virginia, four miles from Winchester. On the 26th of December, the battery was ordered to go into winter quarters at Cumberland, Maryland, and during its movement to that place the most stirring and memorable year of my whole military career came to an end. The battery reached Cumberland on the 2nd of January, 1865, the day after my appointment for the second time as chief of artillery of the Department of West Virginia.

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guns had to be abandoned. The troops were marching or fighting for ten consecutive days.

> They slashed the young trees and saplings with their knives, and chewed the inner bark to relieve the pangs of hunger. . . . the sides of the road being strewn with dead and dying cavalry horses as the column moved on.

Hunter's campaign had partaken very largely of the character of a punitive expedition; he ravaged the country to an extent that disgusted his own troops, on whom fell the task of ejecting the people whose homes were to be burnt; crops were destroyed and also the implements of agriculture. He dealt with the Shenandoah Valley as the Prussians dealt with Belgium and for the same reason—the dread of peasant war, of war on his communications such as caused Wellington to disband his Spanish legions before entering France in 1814. A fairer parallel perhaps is the action of the belligerents in South Africa at the beginning of the present century.

There is a lighter side to Colonel du Pont's narrative of which we may give an example. One of his subalterns who was taken prisoner at Cedar Creek says:—

> Soon after my capture, a soldier of the enemy's provost guard pulled off my boots at the direction of a Confederate officer, who, after trying them on returned them as too small!

These two officers had been boys together. Early attributed his defeat at Cedar Creek to "the partial demoralization caused by the plunder of the enemy's camps." du Ponts' artillery brigade had a surgeon called Knight, who was also captured, but the Confederates at once employed him on the field to succor their wounded. At the end of the day, the Federal counter-attack set the Confederates in motion to the rear, while Knight was doctoring the Confederate general, Ramseur. The pursuit caught up the ambulance, whereupon Ramseur's senior staff officer, taking in the situation, turned to Knight and said, "We surrender to you, sir." So the doctor convoyed to corps headquarters one general, two staff officers and two orderlies, as his personal contribution to the tale of prisoners of war. Colonel du Pont modestly disclaims for his book any other merit than "the testimony of a credible witness" who actually participated in certain episodes of the Civil War, but he may be assured that his unaffected style will commend it to all soldiers, while the facts for which he vouches must prove of value, not merely to the local historian, but to those whose business it is to expound the principles of war.

British Service Gazette Strongly Impressed by Col. Henry A. du Pont's Book

Colonel du Pont's book entitled "The Campaign of 1864 in the Valley of Virginia and the Expedition to Lynchburg," has been very favorably reviewed in the American press throughout the country almost without exception, and it now appears that it has likewise made a strong impression abroad. As a matter of interest, we are reproducing today a copy of an article which appeared in the British "Army, Navy and Air Service Gazette" of July 10th, written by Major Redway, a well-known English military critic.

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